[46] Chapter 3

Political, Administrative, and Judicial Organization of the Mossi Empire

I. Political and Administrative Organization

643 The Mossi empire of Ouagadougou was governed prior to the period of French occupation by a supreme chief, the Mogho Naba, who was revered by all his subjects as a "god" and whose territory, in the minds of his people, had no limits. He had the power of life and death over all his subjects.

[192] The word mogho means "country of the Mossi," but by extension it also means "the world." Thus, in this sense the Mogho Naba was regarded as the master of the world.

643 631 It is said that he had under his rule 333 chiefs, naba, among whom were his ministers, the three sogon'kassemsé (great servitors), and some forty petty chiefs called kougzindba, which refers to the heaps of stones designating the place of each minister or petty naba in the emperor's court.

643 177 The authority of the Mogho Naba over his vassals. In spite of the claims made by a colonial official who was trying to free the canton chiefs of one of the administrative districts of the colony from the authority of the Mogho Naba, the emperor's power never was merely nominal. If it has become so, it is a consequence of the intervention of French [47] administrative authority in the politics of the country -- an intervention which has resulted in assigning too much power to certain chiefs.

643 669 I do not mean to imply that before French penetration into the country there were not real conflicts, wars or mere skirmishes (1), but the chiefs who tried by these means to free themselves from the emperor's authority were usually punished for their temerity.

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(1) In Chapter 1 [not translated] we described in great detail the war waged by the Mogho Nabas Sanum and Wobgo against Lallé. We said also that Sanum warred with the Boussouma Naba and with Boulsa.

000 Ministers and officials in the court of the emperor of the Mossi. We shall provide a list of the persons making up the emperor's court in a later chapter.

Functions of the Ministers

645 The four ministers, Ouidi Naba, Larallé Naba, Gounga Naba, and Baloum Naba, were charged with the nomination of the kombemba (plural of kombéré, vassal chief), subject to the emperor's approval. At the present time they retain the same prerogatives subject to ratification by the administrative authorities. These ministers further assisted the emperor in deciding important matters whenever he called upon them, and they transmitted the
643 orders of the Mogho Naba to [48] his vassals. Today the Mogho
648 Naba is hardly concerned with the regulation of affairs, since these are dealt with by his ministers or by the French authorities. However, the leading court dignitaries always submit to him matters of any importance, they keep him informed about all matters of general interest, and, finally, they report to him any interviews which they may have had with the administrator of the circle, who represents the government of the colony [Ed., the circle (Fr., cercle) is the largest French administrative unit below the colony (Fr., colonie)].

Organization of Territorial Control

634 Each of the emperor's ministers had authority -- we shall
645 presently see under what conditions -- over a group of cantons [Ed., the canton (Fr., canton) is a traditional Mossi administrative unit, containing a number of villages, and several cantons together form a province; the native districts were incorporated into the French administrative system to some extent]. A kombéré naba was head of each canton. Originally and up to the time of Naba Sanum's reign, the Baloum Naba commanded the dimbissi (canton chiefs who were descendants of the recent Mogho Nabas), while the other cantons, except the most thickly populated and hence the richest, such as Zittenga, Manga, etc., were distributed

631 certain amount of independence since they can communicate with the circle commanders with no intermediary other than the interpreter, an indispensable adjunct as long as the chiefs do not attend the [French] schools. On the other hand, the authority of the vassal chiefs still attached to the administrative district of Ouagadougou is, if not entirely lost, at least greatly diminished.

Indeed, their action is thwarted by that of the ministers, the province chiefs, from whom [52] they receive orders, sometimes falsified or amplified by ambitious intermediaries.

It must certainly be conceded that such a state of affairs may have -- it has had -- an unfortunate effect on the progress of these naba. This is an evil which should be remedied without delay.

636 645 565 The local administration at the very beginning made the serious error of failing to take into account the importance of the canton chiefs, most of whom (see the list in the appendix [not translated]) are descendants of the Mogho Naba. On the other hand, virtually all the ministers and other court officials, despite the respect one owes them and the privileges they enjoy, are of humble origin (see Chapter 4 for the origins of the Ouidi Naba and the Larrhallé Naba, for example).

The Petty Kings (Dima) in the Past and Today

643 631 As has been noted in the introductory chapter [not translated], some of the chiefs have gradually freed themselves from the authority of the Mogho Naba and have assumed the title of dima, that is, "king." These chiefs are the Boussouma Naba of the Kaya circle, the Konquizitenga Naba of the Kougoudou circle, the Yako Naba of the Kougoudou circle (Yako subdivision), and the Riziam Naba of the Ouahigouya circle.

These chiefs were, in a sense, independent "rulers," since the emperor's suzerainty over them was so weak [53] that they enjoyed almost complete independence. Some of them, notably the Boussouma Naba and the Yako Naba, have authority over canton chiefs whom they invest in the same way the emperor does.

643 631 These dima maintain courts which with some exceptions, are like that of the emperor of the Mossi.

They were appointed directly by their own ministers; the emperor took no effective role in the proceedings.

Today. The local administration has made these petty kings into simple province chiefs and sometimes -- as happened to the Konquizitenga Naba -- into mere canton chiefs.

Respect due the Mogho Naba. Each year the petty dima sent numerous gifts to the Mogho Naba (horses, cattle, and cowries).

643 An error. The Tenkodogo Naba (1), contrary [54] to what

643 634 1. It should not be assumed that the Tenkodogo Naba controls all the cantons in the administrative district of Tenkodogo.

Several Boussancé [Busansi] cantons were ruled by the Mogho Naba before the French occupation. Out of the 14 cantons which now make up the province called Boussanga, 11 were under the emperor's jurisdiction and their chiefs were appointed by him. Like all vassal chiefs, they were required to visit the emperor once a year and to bring him annual tribute.

Since Tenkodogo has been changed first to a subdivision and then to an autonomous circle, the Boussancé chiefs involved have been appointed directly by the local administration with the consent of the population; the Mogho Naba was no longer consulted. After trouble arose over the appointment of a canton chief, the Mogho Naba had to intervene, and from this affair arose the necessity of putting a relative of the emperor at the head of those cantons organized

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as provinces. The choice fell upon a uterine brother of Naba Kom, Moustapha Kongo.

He was recalled in 1930 after ruling for only three years. His dismissal was certainly due to errors committed in the performance of his duties, but it was also caused by the fact that the Boussancé had been independent too long to take kindly to a master.

Thus, as was pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, the local administration has interfered too much with the organization of the Mossi empire. The position of the Mogho Naba has been completely distorted, and his prestige diminished. This is why the ill-informed official to whom we have already alluded could state that the authority of the Mogho Naba over his vassal chiefs was merely nominal.

A list of Boussancé cantons under the authority of the Mogho Naba follows: (1) Niaogo, (2) Niarba, (3) Lenga, (4) Gon Boussougou, (5) Komtoéga, (6) Beguedo, (7) Ouanragou, (8) Sanogo, (9) Toalla, (10) Zourga, (11) Yakala.

643 has been accepted up to now, is a true king in his territory and as such is absolutely independent of the Mogho Naba at Ouagadougou, to the same degree as the head of the state of Yatenga (Ouahigouya) and the head of Fada N'Gourma.

As was pointed out in an earlier chapter [not translated], the Tenkodogo Naba is the descendant of Naba Zoungrana, the son of Ouedraogo, and is consequently the "elder" of the Mogho Naba, who is a descendant of Naba Oubri, the founder of the Mossi dynasty of Ouagadougou.

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The Boulsa Naba, a direct descendant of the kourita [representative after death] of [55] Naba Oubri, is not a dima but merely a kombéré. He has a vassal, to be sure, the chief of Koupéla in the circle of Tenkodogo who is now considered a province chief, but the Boulsa Naba himself is a vassal of the Mogho Naba.

[57] Chapter 4

The Court of the Mogho Naba. Tribute and Payments Due. Obligations of Mossi Subjects to their Naba.

Morning Honors Paid to the Emperor of the Mossi

644 The council of the emperor of the Mossi is held every morning in front of an antechamber called *zango* which opens out upon a very large courtyard.

821 The Mossi have for a long time regarded the sun as a "god."

116 643 *Wend'pous yan,* "God shows himself," refers to the rising of the sun, but it is used in a figurative sense to refer to the emergence of the Mogho Naba. This illustrates the regard held by the Mossi people for their chief since he is compared to the star of daylight and thus to a "god."

643 292 [822] The Mogho Naba appears each morning dressed in an ample red robe and with a red *gourmousga* (a kind of burnoose) folded and thrown over his shoulders. On his head he wears a cap, a fez, topped with a *wazourfou sebré* (literally, "silver paper" [streamers], that is to say, silver amulet). Red represents the light that comes with the appearance of the sun, while the silver on the cap represents the brilliance of the star itself.

644 [201] Before the time set for the start of the ceremony, the three *sogon'kassemsé* (great servitors) bring into the courtyard the [58] cushion, *nagpouré*, and all the other insignia of office. As soon as the Mogho Naba appears, they arise and make a snapping sound with thumb and index finger to indicate that the *naba* is coming.

[533] "*Wend'pous yan*" is also cried out by the *gagando* and *luinsé* (drummers) as soon as His Majesty sits down. The Bend'Naba [chief drummer] is the only one who does not beat his drum; instead, he rubs his finger back and forth over the waxed part of the drum head to imitate the roar of the lion. Four or five young men bearing loaded rifles take their places in front of the emperor.

Honors are rendered to the Mogho Naba in the following order.

1. The Samandé Naba, Baloum Naba, Wedranga Naba, and Simandé Nabila, as well as the Zusoabin'kassanga (chief eunuch and guardian of the emperor's household), are the first to greet His Majesty and to inquire about his health.

Customary Payments by the Mossi to their Chiefs

643 651 To the Mogho Naba. In former times, before the coming of the French, the kombemba (canton chiefs) [69] and the nakomsé (descendants of Mogho Naba) were all required to come to Ouagadougou once a year to pay their respects to the Mogho Naba on this occasion to present gifts to him (cattle, horses, sheep, cowries, and loads of millet).

For all practical purposes, this amounted to a fixed fee which varied in amount, of course, with the resources of the contributors (canton chiefs and nakomsé) and the number of subjects that the administration entrusted to the leaders.

Although the horses, cattle, and sheep were personally contributed by the kombéré, the cowries and millet were furnished by their Mossi subjects. The canton chief set the amounts of cowries and grain due from each village according to the number of its inhabitants.

The assessment was usually 100 cowries for a married man and 50 for a bachelor (adult). The payment in millet was 10 baskets, each averaging 40 kilograms.

Likewise, a kind of fee was paid annually to the Djiba Naba, crown price, in cowries and livestock. This was done to stay in the good graces of his father, the emperor.

643 651 178 Nowadays the canton chiefs (kombemba), who come to Ouagadougou more often than formerly for important feasts and other events, never return to their lands without paying their respects to the Mogho Naba and giving him the traditional gifts (cowries and livestock). Gifts are now made more often, but they no longer have [70] the same importance. As a general rule, certain canton chiefs still require their people to give small amounts of cowries when they visit Ouagadougou for the celebration of July 14. Some chiefs, however, either because they fear penalties from the administration or because they think that their people are already heavily burdened, prefer to give the little they have personally acquired by selling produce (cotton, yams, etc.) or trading.

Some of the vassal chiefs of the Mogho Naba, who, however, are no longer subject to Ouagadougou since the division of the

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651 Mossi circle into several administrative districts, still continue to
178 make substantial annual gifts to the Mogho Naba (cowries, cattle, and a considerable amount of grain, millet and rice).

634 Payments Due the Kombemba (canton chiefs). Formerly each
651 canton held one or more ritual feasts each year, and the Mossi subjects, that is, the tengsoba (village elders, notables, and those in comfortable circumstances), regularly made gifts to the canton chief (cowries, goats, sheep, and roosters). The Peulh [Peul] gave cattle.

The canton chiefs also retained a portion of the payment made by the people for the benefit of the Mogho Naba.

[178] At the present time these traditional gifts are still made, but white or light gray roosters are more and more being substituted for livestock. [71]

661 Payments due the Ministers of the Mogho Naba. In order to
431 maintain good relations with the ministers, court officials, and
644 intermediaries between the emperor and his vassals, the canton
634 chiefs in former times used to present unspecified gifts to the high dignitaries at court when they paid their respects to the Mogho Naba. A certain number of cowries was given to the pougtiéma, first wife of the Mogho Naba (500 cowries equals two and a half francs, formerly 50 centimes).

A canton chief who has been called to Ouagadougou for some reason may choose not to call on the emperor, but he is obligated to bring cowries, a sheep, or a rooster to the minister who is head of the province in which his canton is located.

651 Common laws. (a) Regulation of market fees. Before the ar-
443 rival of the French, market fees at Ouagadougou were collected for the benefit of the Mogho Naba by a collector in his employ.

In important villages, fees were collected by Gourounsi [Grunshi] captives on behalf of the canton chiefs (kombemba).

651 (b) Hunting. In former times, before the fields were cleared
224 for seeding, the Mossi used to go out in groups of several villages
634 on hunting drives. Small game (partridges, guinea fowl, hares, etc.) were left to the hunters. On the other hand, a haunch of any quadruped killed (deer, gazelle, coba [a kind of horse antelope], etc.) was reserved for the canton chief.

567 *Were slaves part of an estate?* Among the Mossi, the wives
428 are part of an estate on the same footing as the rest of the property
562 of the deceased. The same thing applies to the captives (*yemsé*) and *dogyiri* (house slaves) who constitute and integral part of the estate. They constitute a patrimony to be handed down from father to son in accordance with the customary order of succession. They remain the exclusive property of the legitimate heir and are not distributed as are the wives of the deceased.

[97] Chapter 6

Djiba Naba, Crown Prince of the Mossi Empire

Preliminary Remarks

644 In writing on this subject we have not tried to ascertain whether the canton of Djiba was once independent or whether it was under the direct authority of the Mogho Naba.

At the outbreak of the World War in 1914 the Djiba Naba, a brother of the present emperor, Naba Kom, was drafted into the army, and another brother had to be appointed to take his place. The latter's administration was in many ways unsatisfactory, so when the Djiba Naba, on his return from the front, had to be sent to Doulougou to replace a deceased son of Naba Wobgo, the Mogho Naba retained direct authority over the canton of Djiba. Meanwhile, his eldest son had returned from Tunis and had been officially named the chief of Djiba, but he had had to leave again for military service at Salonika. Thus, it can be said that even before the canton of Djiba had been made the prerogative of the eldest son of Naba Zombré, it had already been under the latter's authority.

It was during the reign of Naba Zombré, twenty-third Mogho Naba, that the eldest son of the emperor was given jurisdiction over the canton of Djiba. Naba Zombré, after Naba Niandeffo, had one of the longest reigns in the history of the country. He actually ruled for sixty years.

643 [98] An old tradition requires an emperor who has ruled for
782 thirty years to go to Oubritenga to celebrate *zom'bika* (literally,

643 "to mount the bika").

782 Bika. When the emperor goes to Oubritenga, a large pit is dug in which all sorts of provisions are placed and, finally, a living man. Poles cover the opening of the tomb where the suffocated man lies, and the whole thing is covered with earth. A throne (guéré) is placed on the grave, and it is there that the emperor -- with little ceremony -- receives the faithful during his stay at Oubritenga. In carrying out this practice, the emperor is considered as having died and then come to life again. Hence, when he returns to Ouagadougou, after an absence which may last for years, he is welcomed by the populace with the greatest enthusiasm, and he must carry out all sorts of customary obligations just as he did at the beginning of his reign.

This custom is of course bound to disappear. In any event, if it were still an obligatory ceremony today, the man would no doubt be replaced by a rooster.

643 644 Naba Zombré went to Oubritenga to mount the bika and remained there for three years. His eldest son acted for him at Ouagadougou and in the process acquired some fame and the esteem of the populace.

When his father returned, it was obviously necessary to bestow upon this prince, who had already tasted the "joys" of ruling, and developed a real talent for command, a post of real distinction. Djiba was chosen. From that day on, [99] as soon as the eldest son of the Mogho Naba reaches the age of discretion, he is appointed Djiba Naba. It is thus understandable that Naba Kom, enthroned at an early age, was much disturbed when two of his sons were sent to Senegal and then to Tunisia.

644 The appointment of the Djiba Naba differs very little from that of other canton chiefs, but this naba has certain obligations which will be discussed below.

Before Appointment

644 782 Before his appointment, the crown prince of the Mossi empire first proceeds to the village of Zango where he must remain for a week. He must bring with him a sheep, a white rooster, and a cow which are to be given to the village chief for use in a sacrifice to

Respect Due the Home of the Naba

554 The kombéré is absolute master of his territory. His subjects must show him the same deference as he himself shows to the Mogho Naba.

However, even though he is not a noble, a minister of the emperor need not remove his cap to respond to the salute of a kombéré. On the contrary, the latter is required to humble himself, to give way before him just as he would before the Mogho Naba.

644 The nabiga (son of a naba), nakomsé (descendants of naba) and, still more, an ordinary Moaga are all categorically forbidden to wear their shoes or their caps at the court of the naba. The only exception to the rule is when the person is a Moslem convert, but even then he always leaves his shoes at the door. He may, however, wear his cap or turban. Shoes and headgear may be put on again only after the subject is 300 meters from the house of the naba. Sometimes, in places where custom is rigorously enforced, the person must be out of sight.

[687] Any infraction of these rules was punished severely by the lash and by confiscation of property by the samand'kamba of the naba [110] when the offender was not of the nobility, that is, was neither nabiga nor nakombga.

291 It is interesting to note that wearing the fez, originally one of the badges of chiefdom, was forbidden to the nabiga and all the more to the talga (ordinary Moaga). Today it is commonly worn by men and youths since European traders and shops have made common an article which was once very rare.

576 ● 613 Shaking hands. One seldom sees a naba extend his hand to one of his subjects or, more especially, to his brothers or fellow nobles (nakomsé).

[154] There are two reasons for this prohibition: 1) the naba is supposed to maintain a certain distance between himself and his subjects, a normal practice; and 2) a superstitious belief has it that persons harboring evil intentions toward the chief put magic powders on their hands to cause swellings which may develop into real abscesses.

576 Thus, although the Mogho Naba would not in the least object
●643 to shaking hands with a Bambara or a Djerma, he would be astonished if a native Moaga -- even an official -- should offer his hand.

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576 As soon as the children of a naba have reached the age of discretion, they may no longer play with their "papa," even less shake hands with him. They must henceforth follow the general rule which requires the Mossi salute, kantissé.

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602 [111] Nowadays naba (kombemba) and nayiridamba (ministers of the emperor) understand the uselessness of such signs of distrust. Therefore, even though they continue to be less familiar with their relatives (brothers, uncles, and sons -- whom they regard as rivals), they willingly offer their hands to Mossi of any standing and to foreigners.

644 Reception by the naba. 1) Up to the present time and despite some thirty-five years of French occupation, the way one is received at the court of the emperor, which, of course, befalls his servitors, has altered very little. Natives who are now officials in the administration and in business enterprises are still treated on the same footing as their less highly placed compatriots. Not only are they required to perform the kantissé (Mossi salute) as described by Father Mangin, but also afterwards they must sit on the ground, a position that is difficult in European clothes. Foreigners (Bambara,
[648] Djerma, even Gourounsi) are offered seats because the soroné do not regard them as fellow countrymen.

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177 2) By the ministers. At the present time all the emperor's ministers have comfortable houses and splendid drawing rooms furnished with Morris chairs and folding chairs. These seats are offered [112] to visitors of any standing, while benches two or three meters long are reserved for persons of less consequence (house boys, cooks, circle guards, notables, etc.).

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352 3) By the kombemba. Benches are always reserved for visitors of note or, if there are none, mats are provided. Some of these chiefs even own a few commonplace chairs and perhaps one or two folding chairs.

773 protection. The Peulh would acquire more cattle by taking charge of the animals belonging to the Mossi, and the Yarga would find better markets for his salt and kola nuts. As for the blacksmith, he would make the many farm implements needed for the cultivation of the vast domains which were either not worked at all or insufficiently exploited because of the lack of tools.

They set the date for their return. Once more the *naba* received them very cordially, but they showed no greater deference to him than they had shown on their first visit.

And so the legend comes to an end by concluding that this is why the Peulh and the Yarga have retained their spirit of independence. As for the blacksmith, who remained poorer, he came [526] to submit to certain regulations which are common to all the Mossi although he never leaves his forge to salute the *naba* when he passes. As has already been noted, he merely strikes his *zanré* against his anvil, just as formerly he struck it on the ground by way of salutation.

[124] Chapter 8

Customs. Enthronement of the Naba. Names.

Death of a Mogho Naba

643 The death of a Mogho Naba is kept secret until the arrival at 766 Ouagadougou of the Tansoba, who was forewarned when the illness became grave. On his arrival, the public is told that "the fire has gone out" (*bougsaré kimé*).

The personages in charge of the burial are Pazany'ting'soba (the undertaker), Tampouy Naba, Kassiri Naba, Benghin Naba, Toghin Naba, Ganin Naba, and Tanghin Naba.

The arrangement of the tomb. The grave in which the mortal remains of the king are buried is really a subterranean hut. Before the king is placed in his final dwelling (1), the following things

1. The body is wrapped in one or several cow hides.

643 766 are placed in the tomb: two sheep skins (gando); some cushions (nagpouya); several bolsters (fourkarnsé); and a zoukougré -- all made of leather. All of these are arranged as though the chief were to lie down to rest.

After the corpse has been washed (Naba Siguire, father of the present Mogho Naba, was washed by marabouts [125] since he was the son of a naba who was a Moslem believer), it is clothed all in white. In the house of every Mogho Naba a corner of the wall is [531 761] decorated with rather attractive designs, and the dead Mogho Naba is carried through it on his way to the tomb. The sight of this corner, which is seldom visited, reminds the chief still living of the mortality of all beings and makes him realize that in the same way as he succeeded someone, so will he, in turn, be replaced by another; the corner will one day become an opening through which his own body will pass at the end of his lifetime.

In addition to the garments in which he is clothed, the following items are placed in the grave beside him: a folded white robe (fou yorgo); a pair of trousers (kourga); a blanket (fou gobga); a pair of slippers (néoda); a small knife (souga); a sword (zangoégo); a gourd of beer (dam) with a calabash over the neck and a small cloth (leppré) over it; a loaf of salt (yamsem); a gourd filled with a hundred kola nuts (gouré wamdé); a sewn sack filled with cowries (liguide ne yolmoumdi); napaga ornaments (douamba and zuyan); and tobacco if the chief smoked or chewed it.

[767] The undertaker is entitled to take the salt, some kola nuts, and some meat when he departs.

[126] When the burial is over, one walks around the house of the deceased.

643 It should be noted that before the burial or sometimes when the death of the king is first known, all of his wives who have children take flight for fear that their son will be made kourita.

The kourita is a child of the deceased and must bear the latter's name. He is exiled and must never, so long as he lives, look upon the new Mogho Naba. Until the emperor is represented on earth by his kourita, his successor cannot be named. This explains the general flight of all of the wives who have children.

The Kourita

●043 As we have just seen, the child who is made kourita is exiled and is no longer regarded as a member of the family. He is himself the Naba, and he must never see the new emperor. His brothers may visit him, and he may visit them.

1. The kourita is washed with the remainder of the water that was used to wash the body of the deceased king.

2. He is carried through the same opening (vouré) as was used to carry out the body of the dead naba.

3. He is given the woman with whom the chief last had sexual relations before he was stricken by illness.

4. He is also given the horse which the deceased king rode every Friday.

[127] He is dressed in the last garments worn by the deceased.

He is given one or two servitors and as many grooms and is then sent to the Kilwin Naba (chief of a hamlet near Bissiga, three kilometers from Ouagadougou), who is required to give him hospitality for about a month.

In the old days, the power of a kourita was almost unlimited. Indeed, during his stay at Kilwin, he had the right to pillage, to ruin everything, and to live like a true potentate. Naturally he always had plenty of willing helpers to aid him in plundering the property of the unfortunate Mossi. The kourita traveled about through many cantons where the kombemba (plural of kombéré) paid him all the honors due the Mogho Naba. It was during these wanderings that he finally chose a permanent residence.

[127] The new Mogho Naba is obliged to satisfy all the desires of the kourita to avoid being visited by him, an omen of disaster. Indeed, the Mossi believe that if the kourita should visit the new Mogho Naba, the latter would die.

The Enthronement -- Before and After

As we have already seen, once the burial is completed, one walks around the house of the deceased king. Then, the following persons are summoned to Ouagadougou:

1. Loumbila Naba.

2. Saponé Naba.
3. Ouagadougou Naba (who lives in Ouagadougou). [128]
4. Zagtouli Naba.
5. Bingo Naba.
6. Gnimdi Naba.
7. Sabtenga Naba.

All of these personages are accompanied by many men, armed with arrows and rifles. They halt before the women's gate (*paghnoré*) and lie down. They have become guards of the royal household.

At this time the candidates for the position of Mogho Naba are all in Ouagadougou, and each of them is calling on the ministers and presenting many gifts to them. There is often competition for the post, but as a rule the eldest son of the king is named to succeed his father.

On the day of the nomination, the *nabiga* (from *naba*, "chief," and *biga* "son") is taken to the home of the Samandé Naba where the ministers hold council. If they agree unanimously to name the *nabiga*, they bring him out of the hut in which he has been anxiously awaiting their decision and tell him that Oubritenga, Zound'wéogo, Koudtenga, and so on are his property (that is, that he is recognized as the sole holder of power and that he alone rules all the lands enumerated). This is ordinarily done in the evening. The next morning the new Mogho Naba dresses and mounts his horse in front of the *paghnoré* (women's gate). The Kalzi Naba takes the bridle, leads the new appointee to the Loumbila Naba, and says to the latter and his followers: "*Oubritenga Ramba, adi Naba, adi Kouda* (People of Oubritenga, here is your master)."

[129] He is then taken before the Saponé Naba, and the latter and his followers are told: "*Koud'tinga Ramba, adi Naba, adi Kouda* (People of Koud'tinga, here is your master)."

The new chief is then presented to the Zagtouli Naba and to the Ouagadougou Naba with the words: "*Naba Rimba Tenga Ramba, adi Naba, adi Kouda* (People of Rimbatenga, here is your master)."

Finally, he is presented to the remaining chiefs with the words: "*Zound'wéogo Ramba, adi Naba, adi Kouda* (Here is your master)."

The Mogho Naba then returns to his house. He is king.

● 643 Soon afterward he comes out and seats himself in the shade of a tree at the home of the Samandé Nabila [assistant to the Samandé Naba]. The *doudissi* are played ensemble, and the whole populace shouts joyfully.

The Ouidi Naba, the Tansoba, and all the other ministers and important personages come to present homage and to swear their fealty and submission. Each one makes a profession of loyalty.

In the evening, the new *naba* leaves the home of the Samandé Nabila and goes to spend the night at the home of the Ouagadougou Naba.

The next day he goes to Passepanga (from *passé*, "to increase, to add," and *panga*, "power, strength") where all other chiefs and descendants of Mogho Naba come to salute him.

At Passepanga the Mogho Naba sits under a tree with thousands of men right and left, all armed with rifles and aligned as for a session of rifle practice. They leave a kind of avenue in front of the new *naba* so that he is easily seen. Each [130] *naba*, with his retinue, comes to swear fealty and to make a profession of loyalty. The brothers of the new appointee, even those who were his rivals, come to make obeisance. The Mogho Naba then retires to the home of his *gansoba* (host) and sees to it that everyone has ample quantities of *dam* and that *nissi* (cows) are slaughtered for them.

The Mogho Naba remains at Passepanga for a week, and then he goes to Dimvoussé ("king's rest").

Finally, two or three years later, he chooses the place where he wishes to build his permanent residence.

Certain Names and Their Meaning

551 When appointed, every chief loses his given name, and he is even forbidden to say it. He chooses a name for himself when he is appointed.

We shall now study some of these names and try to establish the moral precepts that go with them.

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643 1. Mogho Naba Wobgo (Boukary was his real name). When Mogho Naba Sanum (literally, "gold") drove his brother Boukary from his territory, the latter took refuge at Bassawarga where he conquered the Gourounsi whom he enslaved, although later they became his *sofa* [guards or military retinue].

551
643 When Naba Sanum died, several candidates presented themselves to be named Mogho Naba.

Boukary also returned, accompanied by an impressive escort of Gourounsi armed with arrows, rifles, and clubs. He made gifts to the ministers, as all his [131] rivals were doing. However, seeing that the nomination of a successor to his late brother was being delayed, he one day remarked to the Ouidi Naba: "Designate anyone you wish for the throne, but I shall wrest it from him."

The evening of the day set for the nomination arrived (we have already noted that each candidate was put in a hut at the home of the Samandé Nabila), and the future Naba Wobgo assembled all his Gourounsi followers and addressed them more or less in these terms: "The new Mogho Naba is to be appointed tonight; when I go to the home of the Samandé Nabila you follow me, be armed, and surround the place. If by any chance I am not named, I shall say to you when I come out, 'Forward! Spare no one, not even the ministers, the other *nabissi*, or the new appointee.' "

That night, the Gourounsi, faithful to the commands of their chief, did as he had ordered.

While the ministers were discussing which of the *nabissi* should be named (of course, the future Naba Wobgo was automatically eliminated), the Larrhallé Naba came out to relieve himself. In the half-darkness he was astonished to see the men armed with arrows, rifles, and clubs. He reported these disquieting developments to the Ouidi Naba, who at once came out to see for himself. Everyone knew that only Boukary could organize such a plot. Fearing that they would otherwise all be murdered, they unanimously appointed him Mogho Naba.

When the time came for him to select the name that would be his until death, he said this: [132] "*Kim missi laguem koabga kon bougouss'Wobgo* (a hundred ghosts cannot frighten an elephant)." I am sure that here he was addressing his competitors. Then he added: "*Ni Tíem Koudré Banghe pouiré taloug'pa salga* (an old man who bequeaths his property wisely avoids strife)." Here he was addressing the ministers. He was aware that he was not liked, so he had prepared for war. The ministers had not wanted to name him and had done so only out of fear of being murdered.

551 643 2. Mogho Naba Kom (kom, "water"). When he was still quite young, Mogho Naba Kom, who is on the throne today, succeeded his father, Naba Siguiri, to the great surprise of his enemies. He took the name of Naba Kom.

(a) Kom sound Tambdo ti koulg'king lad moaghana. (During the rainy season when much water falls, the rivers and seas rejoice to see their water swell.)

(b) Neb san toul béogo bi a balem Wendé. (He who dreams of tomorrow must place his faith in God.)

(c) Sandib, laguem koabga ti pigh'pam nionré. Since he was very young at the time of his nomination, many begrudged him the appointment, and sorcery was used to cause his death. This third name means "A hundred charlatans, makers of charms, cannot prevail against the pigha (rock, i.e., the chief)."

(d) Gonpaniendégha kon nies niédga. (One does not [133] wipe one's bottom with thorns and brambles.) This alludes to his enemies and means that in spite of them he rules all the same.

(e) Tang'niebga belem mogré pamé wek'balbo. (Since the crocodile can only really live and procreate along the banks of watercourses, what is a mountain crocodile to do if he desires many offspring? He must move his dwelling and go to the water.)

551 645 3. The Ouidi Naba (actually named Rabi), Naba Boulga (literally, "well [pit]").

(a) Baning sorr'yoagba n'tilig kinsé la wamsé. (The large white or sorghum grown under the Strophanthus has no fear of being eaten by birds or monkeys.)

(b) Yel somd'boulgh'tont niédbo. (The well of righteousness cannot be filled.)

4. The Gounga Naba (actually named Namébrogo Ilboudo), Naba Yemdé (literally, "hippopotamus"). Yem deng kouilga ti zimbi datin dem yaré. ("When the hippopotamus is first to arrive at the waterhold, the fish can play about at will," or "when fish play around a hippopotamus, they will not be troubled by either big fish or fishermen.")

5. The Baloum Naba (Tenga Ouédraogo), Naba Tanga (literally, "mountain").

(a) "A mountain crowned with trees is soon noticed," or "in order to be respected, one must have good support, good backing."

551 [134] (b) Kata laghem koagb'kon sirigh tanga. (A hundred
645 barking hyenas cannot shake a mountain.)

6. Kamsoro Naba (Ouene Nongué), Naba Niouga ("cat"). He is chief eunuch. Nioug'nok wendé na pa ne Sabelem. (A cat who trusts in God is sure to preserve his blackness.) In other words, one who is protected by the Mogho Naba, his "God," will never lack for anything; everything will come to him as if by magic.

7. Naba Gnighnemdo (Mogho Naba). Naba Oubri, the founder
551 of the Ouagadougou dynasty, fell in love with one of his own daugh-
● 643 ters and had intercourse with her. The girl became pregnant and
835 gave birth to a son. The wives of Naba Oubri wanted to put both the child and the mother to death. They asked the girl the name of the child's father, and she replied, "Ask my father, he ought to know." When Oubri was questioned, he answered: "Bassi yan ya mam lam gnighnemdo (Do nothing, this is my own flesh)."

The child of this incestuous union was thus named Gnighnemdo and later succeeded his relative, Naba Nasbiré.

The Placing of Statues at Loumbi-Raogo

211 Ganlougdou. In the old days, upon the death of a Mogho
306 Naba or soon after, a jeweler was called in [135] to make a wax
532 statuette, later to be cast in bronze, in the likeness of the late
chief. The jeweler also made statuettes of one soroné, one napagha,
one bendré, and one lounga, and all were deposited at the home
[177] of the Loumbila Naba. This practice was suppressed upon the ar-
rival of the French, and it appears that there is no statue of Naba
Siguiri, father of Naba Kom, the present naba, at Loumbila.

The acting Mogho Naba is never supposed to see these statues,
and the jeweler who made the likeness of his father must not see
[435] them either. The jeweler was paid 100,000 cowries, a horse, a donkey,
a cow, a wife, a large robe, and 1,000 kola nuts, and he was then
sent away from Ouagadougou. He must never return and must never
see the new Mogho Naba.

These gifts represented a considerable sum in the old days, even today for that matter. They were given to aid the jeweler in consulting seers and charlatans for the purpose of prolonging his life. Tradition has it that unless he followed faithfully the prescriptions given by the seers, he would die within a year after completing the statues.

631 766 everyone gives what he can. Everyone from the Nabitienga down through his brothers and sisters, close relatives, and their brothers and sisters, in short, anyone even remotely related to the deceased, comes up and offers something. Most often the gift is made up of cowries.

The koupéogo is then returned to the zaongo. Some zom kom (water with flour in it) and some dam (dolo or fermented millet beer) are poured at the door of the antechamber.

The benda and other drummers gather up all the cowries they have received and go a short distance from the house to divide them up.

The benda are expected to give a few cowries to any Yarga, Silmimoaga, or sayan (1) who happens to pass by during the distribution.

Sayan: blacksmith.

643 428] (b) Fado. This is the share that goes by right to the Mogho Naba from the estate of every kombéré.

[138] The Mogho Naba sends representatives to whom are entrusted a rooster, a sheep, and, depending on the importance of the chief, a cow and 5,000 to 10,000 cowries.

As soon as he has been presented to the Nabitienga, the first envoy of the Mogho Naba says to him: "Nab'kayé ti mog'naba yel tid wa pous' nabitiengh'togo lad reguib' lokon'wa tib laguemb taba ti ya yel koudgo (Such-and-such a chief having died, the Mogho Naba sends us to deliver his condolences to the Nabitienga and to request of him that the quiver of the naba be turned over to us so that it may be placed beside those of his ancestors, as is the custom)."

The Nabitienga thanks them and orders the loko [quiver] to be brought out at once. It is placed on the ground, and sacrifice is made, in turn, of the chicken, the sheep, and even the cow sent by the Mogho Naba.

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1. Yarga: a Dioula [Diula] of the Mandé [Mande] group. Silmimoaga: one who has adopted the customs of the Peulh.

631 All of these preliminaries are only the beginning, and when
643 they are completed, the emperor's first envoy orders the Nabitienga
428 to go out into the sunshine so that the fado [share for the Mogho
766 Naba] may be claimed. The Nabitienga complies with the request. Thereupon the first envoy says to him through a messenger: "Mogh' Naba yé tid wa reg fado, ya nig'tousri (1,000 head of cattle), pissi tousri (1,000 sheep), bouss'tousri (1,000 goats), foutou tousri (1,000 garments)," etc. To which the Nabitienga replies: "Tond ba sin ki a ka bas roumsi ne arzek'yé (our late father left neither animals nor other wealth sufficient to satisfy the demands of the Mogho Naba)."

The messenger reports the reply to the emperor's representatives. The relatives of the Nabitienga go [139] to gather together a wanka (hoe), a laré (ax), and a goégo (sickle), and then they tell the nayiridamba (representatives) to go into the antechamber where all of the wealth is piled up. The nayirdamba [sic] send in some soroné who come back and report on what is there. Then they ask the Nabitienga for the fado a second time, and this time it is given to them in the form of the following articles: a robe, a pair of trousers, bracelets, fodo, rouamba (ornaments of the napagha), an ample robe, a pair of slippers, a knife (zangoégo), some salt, some cowries, kalgo (soumbala) balls, nemdo (dried meat), moui (rice), etc.

The envoys are housed for a whole week by the Mabitienga, aided by the inhabitants and his relatives.

On the eighth day, before taking leave of his guests, the Nabitienga slaughters a cow, has large quantities of saghbo and beer prepared and sheep killed, gives clothing to all the envoys of the Mogho Naba, offers them up to 50,000 cowries, depending on their importance, etc.

He has a horse saddled with his father's saddle, and the animal is tethered in front of the antechamber.

One of the nayirdamba unties the horse and walks three times around the house of the deceased naba. The person who mounts the horse is given liguidi (cowries) and clothing and the fez of the naba. He is entitled to keep all this after his return to Ouagadougou, after he has reported to the authorities. The horse becomes the property of the Mogho Naba and is turned over to the Wedranga Naba (personal equerry of the king).

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595 foreigners who are being housed by the *naba*. [164]

Each *sogoné* or *samanbiga* chooses a mother from among the
644 wives of the *naba* (only those in the first two sections).

595 He helps her to cultivate her plot of ground and receives in
357 608 return a little food over and above the ration of *sagbo* given to the *sogoné* as a group.

At Nanore (1), for example, it was formerly the rule that when a woman brought some *sagbo* to her adopted son, she could not simply hand it to him. Instead, holes were dug in the courtyard of the *naba*, into which the woman put the *sagbo* and sauce. Then the young man came to eat the food, and later the woman came back for her bowls.

644 Finally, it is still forbidden for anyone to play a guitar when
595 a *napagha* is passing by unless the player is the *naba* himself or
533 someone called upon to play by the *naba*. It should be noted that
687 the Moaga prefers the guitar for intimate occasions. Therefore, to
832 play it when a *napagha* passes by is actually to court her.

The Pogsiouré, or the Recruitment of Sogoné and Saman'kamba

643 Aside from a few special cases limited by custom which we
562 shall presently describe, the *naba* can never dispose of the daughters of his subjects, either to make them [165] his own wives or to bestow them on someone else, without the permission of the parents.

Pogsiouré comes from *pog'*, the diminutive of *pagha*, "woman," and from *siouré*, diminutive of *sioubo*, "to give anticipating a profit."

562 As a result of family quarrels or even voluntarily, a Moaga
431 "may give away his daughters and those of his brothers and close
643 relatives to the *naba*." It is obvious that the *naba* cannot keep all of these girls, so he gives some of them to his brothers, his uncles, his sons, and even to ordinary Mossi who have done him a service.

In the same way -- and this is more frequent -- every *sogoné* (page) or *samand'biga* [singular of *samand'kamba*] (bodyguard or

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1. Canton in the administrative district of Koudougou.

562 431 643 groom) who has served his naba satisfactorily receives, at the time he is freed, a young girl who may be nubile, but who may, on the other hand, be just a small child.

In either case, the former servitor is required to call upon the naba from time to time and to take him gifts (cowries or roosters). If the girl is still living with her relatives, in addition to his trifling presents to the naba, the fiancé may make a few presents to his in-laws, although it is not obligatory.

562 643 644 858 Pogsiouré. The first daughter born of a marriage between a Moaga subject (former servitor, son, brother, or uncle of the naba, etc.) and the woman given to him [166] by the naba becomes the "property" of the latter with full rights over her. She is known as "the daughter of the pogsiouré" and is fated to become pogsiouré in her turn.

643 644 858 1357 If the first-born is a boy, the naba may bring him to his court as soon as he reaches the age of discretion to make him either a sogoné or a samand'biga, and the child's father cannot make the slightest objection.

This does not imply that under Mossi law the sogoné and samand'kamba must be children of the pogsiouré. As absolute master of all his subjects, the naba can recruit his servitors throughout his domain as he needs them, with no opposition by the Mossi to this recruitment.

644 858 562 The fate of the daughters of the pogsiouré. The girls are taken from their relatives as soon as they are old enough to work and are entrusted by the naba to his own wives.

The latter, for all practical purposes, become the adoptive mothers of these children and, as such, see to their food and clothing. This does not prevent the real mother from bringing cowries and clothing to her daughter, and to make sure that the child will be well treated by the napagha (wife of the naba), she sometimes [431] even brings the latter a gift of kalgo (soumbala) or karite butter (kamé).

[594] When the girls reach puberty, the naba chooses the most attractive for his fiancées, and the [167] others are given to some of his administrators or to his own relatives.

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357 for example), and in return the adoptive mother gives him a bit of
608 food, over and above his regular ration.

644 [169] In view of these circumstances, those who are not required
357 at the home of the naba to care for the horses or for some special
service spend half the year with their relatives.

It is perhaps of interest to point out that the samand'kamba are
644 mostly sons of the chiefs of villages of nabissi (sons of naba), sons
357 of nakomsé (descendants of naba and nabissi), and sometimes even
565 sons of canton chiefs at the court of the Mogho Naba. There is also
the child of the ordinary Moaga, who was not made a sogoné because he was not thought worthy of the position. The rigorous discipline required of the former young men teaches them "to suffer in order to be able to command."

644 Anticipation of freedom. If the sogoné or samand'biga is the
357 eldest son and is old enough to marry at the time of his father's death,
the naba is required to free him, even though the period of obligatory service has not been completed.

● 643 Another custom, the zan-boko. There is another curious custom
844 among the Mossi. If during the course of his journeys the naba stops
584 in a village and during his stay a girl is born to a local Mossi woman,
the child is his, with full rights, if he has been told of the birth.

However, the naba often knows nothing about the event, and the father takes care not to speak of it and then makes whatever disposition of the child he wishes.

844 [170] This custom, however, is practiced to its fullest extent between
584 Mossi. A Moaga sana (stranger) passing through the village is
invited by the elders to dig the zan-boko (hole in which the placenta must be buried). This is his zounogo, "opportunity." He gives a few cowries (100 to 200) to the head of the family and becomes the fiancé of the baby girl. Later on, when she reaches puberty, the man will make the customary gifts to the parents, and nothing will stand in the way of the marriage.

Chapter 12

The Penetration of Islam into Mossi Country

Islam in the Land of the Mogho Naba

643 794 771 The Mogho Naba, like his subjects, is above all an animist, and it is hard to understand how he reconciles his fetishism with the complex dogmas of Islam and with the many interdictions of Christianity.

The Mogho Naba, however, is quite capable of being a Catholic or a Moslem on appropriate occasions and at the same time respecting the traditions of his ancestors. Thus, when the Christians celebrate Christmas, the emperor of the Mossi devoutly attends Midnight Mass. He keeps his cap on, however, just as the bishop wears his miter. In the same way he embraces Islam during the following three festivals: the moaghrem (the Mossi zembendé); Ramadan (nolokré, "to loosen the mouth"); and, finally, the zoulhési (the Mossi tabaski or kibsa).

797 Before describing how the Mogho Naba celebrates these Moslem festivals, we shall give a brief history of Islam among the Mossi and discuss the appointment of imams.

The Arrival of Islam among the Mossi

797 793 It was during the reign of Naba Doulgou, the twenty-third Mogho Naba [204] after Oubri, founder of the Ouagadougou dynasty, that Islam took root in the empire of the Mogho Naba, and it was at that time that an imam was appointed at Ouagadougou.

Naba Sawadogo, who succeeded his father, Doulgou, sent his children to the Koranic school. Many of them obtained a fairly good education there, and the eldest son, who later succeeded to the throne under the name of Naba Koutou, even became a marabout. The development of Islam in Mossi country dates from his reign, as does practice of giving children of the Mogho Naba Moslem names such as Saïdou, Mahama, Moumouni, etc.

797 the case for canton chiefs and ministers, this position is handed
793 down in [206] the same family. Obviously a son is not called to succeed his father unless he has been educated well enough to settle, to the satisfaction of the emperor, the few questions which will be submitted to him. In any event, the choice will always fall on a member of the family of Moustapha, the first Imam.

Celebration of the Moslem Festivals by the Mogho Naba

796 Moaghrem (the Mossi zambende). The moaghrem marks the beginning of the new year of the hegira. Every Moslem family must feast on the evening before the holiday. The next morning, that is, on the tenth day of the month of Moaghrem [Muharram], the sourata, book of the year, is read, and one learns the name of the saint who will preside over the destiny of the world for the next 360 days. Alms are stipulated. This festival, which represents a return to joy, solemnly commemorates the day on which the Patriarch, Noe [Noah] (called Nabi Nouhou by the marabouts), alone blessed by the Lord, first set foot on dry land after the flood which exterminated mankind. This was a return to life, and it was the Day of Fire.

The Mossi have never understood the meaning of the Moslem festivals and celebrate them in their own way. They did not understand that the "Day of Fire" meant a return to family life, to cooking food over a fire, but instead made up a curious custom which is more reminiscent of the taking of the Bastille. On that day they light torches, chase each other about, and burn each other. This sometimes results in [207] real injuries which fortunately are easily healed.

The Silmissi (Peulh of Mossi country) do rather better since they sprinkle themselves with cool water. This represents at least a wish for good health.

The tabaski (zoulhési or Mossi kibsa). In the old days the Mogho
796 Naba was required to go to the great mosque at Zoaghna on the day
643 of tabaski.

Yamaba, chief of the Yarcé (Dioula whose ancestor, Koanda, came to Mossi country during the reign of Koumdoumié, the eighth Mogho Naba), has the duty of sacrificing the cattle and sheep

196 643 provided by the emperor. The meat is distributed among the assembled faithful. The salam took place in the mosque, and on this occasion the emperor became a Moslem whether or not he was actually a believer. He was expected to take his place among the faithful immediately behind the Imam. As soon as the Imam finished reciting verses from the sacred books, he turns toward the faithful, says, "A salama leckum," and then shakes the king's hand. When the prayer is ended, the emperor returns home, and the Imam soon follows to sacrifice the tabaski sheep. The Mogho Naba himself is required to hold the animal's tail.

Ramadan (Mossi nolokré). It is well known that Ramadan or Lent of the Moslems (the nolokré of the Mossi, from noré, "mouth," and lokré, "untie the knot, loosen") involves a series of privations and abstinences [208] during which the defenceless body is subjected to all sorts of indispositions, sometimes giving rise to real illness.

It is also obvious that the emperor is subject to so severe a regime and to so many obligations that it would be impossible for him to fast, as do the marabouts, even if he were a believer. Nevertheless, the emperor has been so thoroughly persuaded of the yelsomdé (bliss) attained by the penitent after the thirty days of suffering and since he is by no means indifferent to anything concerning the splendors of the Beyond, he asks for volunteers among his entourage who will practice abstinence in his place. On the day of the festival, they receive many gifts (robes, cowries, etc.).

What follows is a summary of the manner in which the king of the Mossi celebrated Ramadan a few years ago.

On the day of the festival, the Gare-yarga (Yarga in charge [272] of the saddle) appears early in the morning bearing hydromel in an old gourd which is said to have been used by Naba Rimba. He drinks a little of the liquid to "break the fast" and then offers a gourdful to the Mogho Naba for the same purpose. The remainder is given to the ministers and other court officials.

The emperor offers food to all present (bowls of rice and sagbo). He has had one or two cows and many sheep slaughtered in advance.

Around seven-thirty in the morning the Mogho Naba used to go with his usual entourage to Roundé-yiri (a place of prayers, a kind of outdoor mosque which [209] used to be located northwest

796 643 of the present house of Ouendasida, the police adjutant), and there he attended the salam presided over by the Imam.

After the ceremony, the Imam, surrounded by the faithful, went to call upon the emperor for the doua (a kind of benediction involving the recitation of verses from the Koran). The Imam received kola nuts and sheep or a cow.

[368] At the present time the two mosques exist in name only; the one real mosque is that of the Imam in the ward of the mohémé (marabouts). The present Mogho Naba never attends the salam on feast days. He goes to the Circle [Administration Building], then to the home of the Governor, and finally returns home to await the visit of the representative of Islam in Mossi country.

The only Mogho Naba who was truly a Moslem was Naba
643 Koutou, the twenty-seventh successor of Oubri. He was sent to
368 the Koranic school at Sagabtenga and is said to have made a
177 creditable record there. When he succeeded his father, he installed a mosque in front of the women's gate. Since then a mosque has traditionally been located in the same place on the palace grounds of every Mogho Naba, even though, as in the case of the present emperor, he was not a believer.

643 Naba Koutou regularly made his salam in accordance with the rites of the Moslem faith and even observed the thirty days
177 of abstinence during the month of fasting. [210] All his children had Moslem names. All, except his eldest son who succeeded him as Naba Sanum, were sent to Koranic schools, although none did any serious work there since they were more interested in becoming naba.

During his lifetime, Naba Koutou himself never sentenced
643 anyone to death, even if he were guilty. He loved peace. When
696 his ministers submitted serious cases to him, he always said: "Go and do what seems best and do not tell me what fate was meted out to the guilty." Like Pontius Pilate, he allowed his ministers to bear the responsibility for the crimes. Since he gave little credence to what the priests said of poéré (confession by the use of magic), he acquitted individuals condemned to death by that barbaric method.

264 meal of *sagbo* in the evening.

What we call breakfast is hardly known. Between the two main meals, however, the chiefs have meat grilled or roasted. They are very fond of it and have it seasoned with enough salt and pepper to make it possible to consume the endless number of small gourds of beer which they drink from morning to night. [273]

The Moaga has only one real meal a day, the evening meal. A large millet cake satisfies the day's hunger. If there is any left over, he keeps it carefully for his morning meal. If there is none left, a frequent state of affairs, he makes do with his *zompanrga*, crushed millet diluted with water and sometimes eaten with a bit of vegetable fat or a few peanuts.

He rarely eats any rice, and if he has no *sagbo*, he contents himself with *benga* and *souma*.

261 527 It is during the festivals that the Moaga eats his fill. At such times the head of the compound kills a goat, a sheep, or some chickens and has *sagbo* and *fabirama* prepared, or beans with copious amounts of karite butter. This is the feast. The members of the family stuff themselves to the point where attacks of diarrhea are inevitable. The results of the attacks are all the more serious in that they are never cared for properly.

The only seasonings known to the Moaga are *kalgo* (*soumbala*),
263 red pepper, okra, and salt. No more than a few years ago, how-
439 ever, before the [251] development of trade in the colony, salt
was brought from Timbuktu and Mopti by the Dioula and Yarcé and was so expensive that the Mossi people who lived in the countryside often went for six months without tasting salted food.

241 There is reason to believe that the time is not far off when the Moaga will devote his efforts much more intensively to cash crops, such as cotton, potatoes, peanuts, etc. In this domain, the province chiefs at Ouagadougou have made real progress.

Mogh'Nab' Kawinré (Threshing the Grain of the Mogho Naba)

241 643 782 *Sacrifices.* For this ceremony, the emperor summons the Mankougoudougou Tengsoba (a descendant of the autochthonous Nioniossé, masters of the land) to Ouagadougou and gives him a

241 sheep to be sacrificed to the threshing floor (zéiga).

643 The work. After this sacrifice, around two-thirty in the after-
782 noon, the Kam Naba (a notable in the section of the Baloum
Naba) proceeds to the threshing floor with the young men from
Bilbalogo and Dapoya who have been assembled for the occasion.
The operation involves beating the millet stalks with tree branches
cut to form an obtuse angle and called dabandé or soika.

643 When the job is done, the workers depart, [252] leaving the
grain to be gathered up another day.

241 The next morning they return to the field, preceded by the Bend' Naba (chief drummer), who plays the bouloumbougri kabse nanamsé to which the other drummers respond with bouroum-bouroum (the Bend Naba gives the names of the emperor's ministers, recalling the origins of each one, and wishes a happy new year to Oubri-yiri Naba, "master of the house of Oubri," that is, to the Mogho Naba; bouroum-bouroum has no special meaning).

Immediately thereafter, the Bend Naba invites the young men to the warba (funeral dance), which is actually only a confused stamping on the millet which in the process is scattered far and wide. Suddenly the drums stop, the signal for a rest. Then the Kam Naba from Bilbalogo divides the pile of millet into two parts by tracing a straight line across the center of the zéiga. The people from Bilbalogo (the section of the Baloum Naba) gather one half, and those from Dapoya (section of the house slaves) gather up the other half.

Whether it is a good or bad year, the emperor's harvest is expected to yield 100 baskets (péog' koabga) full of grain.

The Mogho Naba sends 50 to 70 canari of beer to the workers and shortly goes there himself. He also distributes two or three wassé (from waga, load of 1,000 kola nuts) to the ministers and to the workers.

After thanking and encouraging the workers, the [253] emperor returns to his house, escorted by his ministers and all the horsemen.

643 Mankougoudougou Tensoba then uses wet ashes to make three
241 lines on the ground in different parts of the zéiga. Then he takes
782 a lagha (small earthenware jar) and puts some water into it. He

643 pronounces a few sacramental words and lightly sprinkles the
241 millet, saying: "Zâbre saga Ybéogo sâga, samb'da kôbo la ka toin
782 sameb'la fi yé (the morning and evening rains may put a stop to
the cultivation of the fields, but cannot injure the health of the
King)." He next takes a straw broom (sagha) and pulls it apart
in order to get a bit of millet to put into the lagha mentioned
[343] above. He goes then to the temporary granary (lourgho, granary
made of Mossi secco) and walks around it three times. An emissary of the emperor gives him a white rooster (nora-pelga), some beer (dam), and zom-kom (water with flour in it). The priest sits down in the shade of the lourgho and before making the sacrifice pronounces the following words: "Naba Siguiri bad'kom, deghin kon Naba Wogbo, tib reg, kon Naba Sanum, tib kon Naba Koutou, tib reg' kon Naba Baongo, tib kon Naba Karfo, tib reg'kon Naba Sawadogo, tib reg la be kon Nab, gnimassem, la lafi," which means literally, "I offer this rooster, this water with flour, and this beer to Naba Siguiri (father of the reigning emperor) in order that he will persuade the Mogho Nabas Wobgo, Sanum, Koukou, Baongo, Karfo, and Sawadogo, to accept them, so that the emperor may enjoy good health and happiness."

The Tengsoba then hands the small quantity of millet [254] which he took earlier to the pugtiéma (first wife of the king) to be made into a millet cake and offered to the spirits (manes of deceased emperors and other spirits of the threshing floor).

643 251 Transporting the millet to the granaries. The wives, daughters, and sisters of the Mogho Naba are alone given the duty of carrying the millet to the granaries (baoré) (1). We have already noted that there are supposed to be a hundred loads of grain, even though the harvest may not fill twenty baskets. The number of baskets required by custom is attained by putting a small quantity of millet in each basket.

643 241 The millet intentionally left on the zéiga. A little millet is purposely left here and there on the zéiga, and the Kassiri Naba (village chief) takes it for his own use. This signal favor, however,

1. This baoré granary is made of earth mixed with quantities of straw.

643 241 imposes a heavy obligation on the chief. He is expected to invite the emperor's principal bodyguards (samand'kamba) -- and there are many of them -- to a meal. He is also required to furnish a basket of millet for sowing the field of the Mogho Naba when the first rains come.

652 644 Utilization of the produce of the emperor's fields. As noted in an earlier chapter [255] under Labor required of Mossi subjects by their naba," the Mogho Naba does not use the millet from his own field. The produce is used to feed the horses, to support the pages and samand'kamba, and especially to make beer on the festive days known as the tinsẽ and basgha of the king.

[256] Chapter 17

Inheritance and Rights of Succession among the Mossi

428 We have dealt with the question of inheritance at considerable length in the chapter on "Customs and Enthronement of Mossi Chiefs." We return to the subject because it seems necessary to clarify certain details of this question which is so important from the legal point of view.

The opening of succession. The succession is open upon the death of an individual, but property is not passed until after the funeral ceremonies (for all that concerns funerals, see the section on "Death").

Why is there a delay in taking possession of the property? As we have seen above in many chapters, the Moaga is superstitious. An old belief has it that to take possession of the property of the deceased before the funeral is celebrated will bring certain death to the heir or will cause some calamity for the whole family.

Further, since all the members of the family must be assembled for the funeral observances, the inheritance is well publicized, and [257] no one can later claim to have been defrauded.

Requirements for succession. In order to inherit, the following requirements must be met.

1. To be born before the succession is opened.

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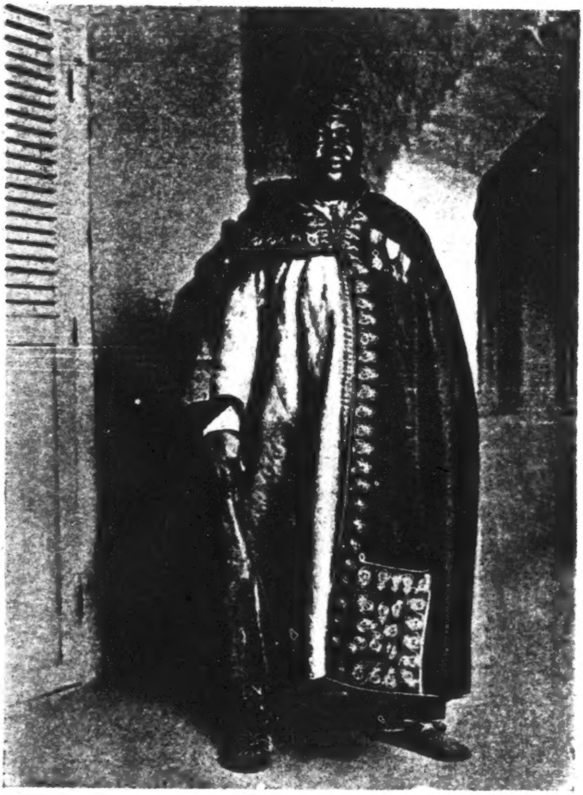

Mogho Naba Kom Ruler of the Mossi.

From the Mission of the White
Fathers at Ouagadougou.

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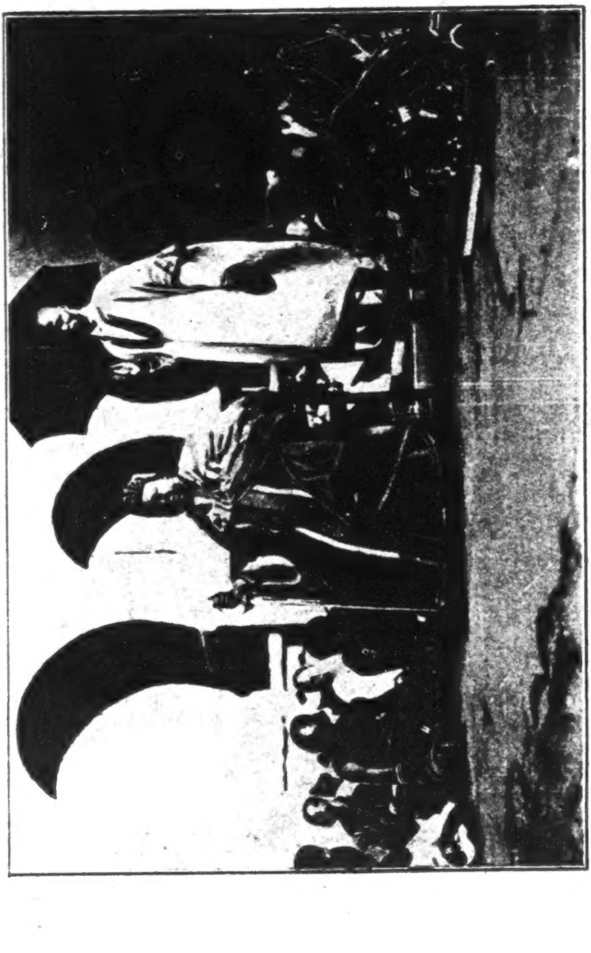

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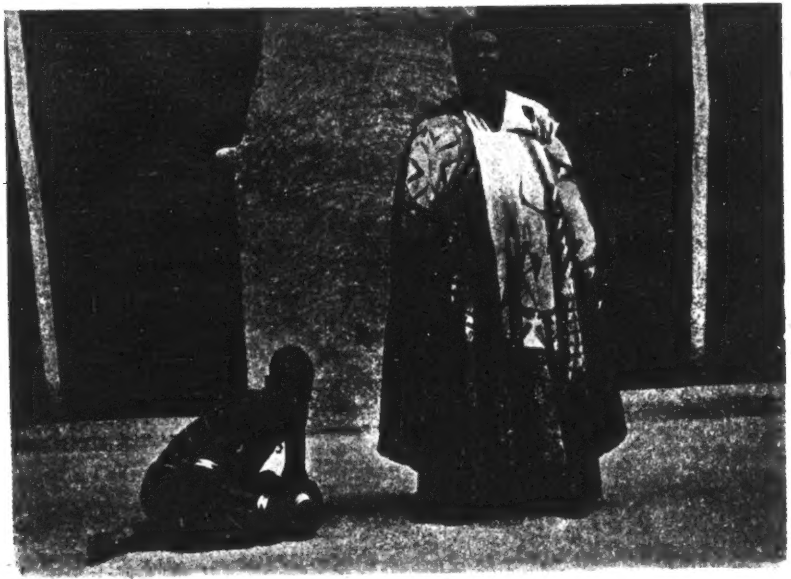

Mogho Naba

Mogho Naba

The Ruler of all the Mossi and a Servitor.

From the Mission of the White Fathers
at Ouagadougou.

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BOOK I. POLITICAL LIFE

Chapter 1. The Country and Its Inhabitants

142 Although the Mossi is not a handsome type of Black, there is
nothing disagreeable about him. He is rather tall, with lively eyes,
woolly hair, flat nose, occasionally rather fine features, lips which
are broad without being too thick, and cheeks heavily marked with
three parallel lines running from the temples to the chin and a fourth
leading perpendicularly from the nose to the other three. His limbs
are muscular, and his color neither ebony nor copper but an intermediate hue.

291 He acquires a truly attractive and resolute air when he dresses in
festive clothes, with his broad, dark blue, Zouave-like trousers, his
loose shirt made of white and blue fabric strips which falls lightly
over the arms, and on the right shoulder his *doré*, a weapon consisting
411 of a slightly bent iron rod, flattened at one end and terminating at
the other in a ring hafted perpendicularly to a short stick. His wrist
[301] is often adorned with a copper bracelet, and he nearly always carries
at his waist a stiff knife, enclosed in a leather sheath which ends in
a tuft of leather strips with cowries attached to them. He wears a
291 cap made of two diamond-shaped pieces of colored fabric half-sewn
together; the two free ends may serve to cover the ears and cheeks,
but are usually wornraised in the shape of a tiara. A great fighter,
he wields the knife with dexterity or strikes with the *doré* which can
become a dangerous club.

173 The Mossi are a conquering people. They have not always lived
in the territory they now occupy. But where did they come from?
648 The elders questioned all say that their people came from Gambaga
643 (British Gold Coast), and this is why the Moro Naba Wobro took refuge
in Gambaga when he was dethroned by the French conquest; this is
also why the naba of Gambaga is notified whenever a Moro Naba dies,
and why the shoes, cap, and scepter of command of the deceased
are sent to him as gifts to be laid on the ancestral tomb. Gifts are
also sent to the naba of Fada N'Gourma, which the Mossi call "Bingo."
When the Moro Naba dies, his bow and quiver are presented to the

173 chief of Fada along with his two best horses, saddled, his two youngest
648 wives, twelve head of cattle, one captive, and three bars of salt.
[643] When the naba of Fada dies, however, nothing is sent to the Moro
Naba, but his best horse is sent to the chief of Gambaga.

There has been contact, therefore, between the Gourmantché /Gurma/ of Fada, the Mossi, and the Dagomse /Dagomba/ of Gambaga. The Gourmantché claim that they come from Bornu. The first naba of Fada was a slave of the naba of Bornu. The Gourmantché formerly ruled the area as far as Dori. The Peul /Fulani/ came and chased them from the region after a long war. The Gourmantché, however, did not fight either the people of Gambaga or the Mossi. If they ever fought the latter, it was in the course of civil wars; the naba of Fada requested the Mossi to help him against his own subjects.

/5/ This is how the Mossi tell of the conquest of the territory. A
173 daughter of the chief of Gambaga, called Yennenga, had a son by the hunter Riala. This son was given the name Weddaogo. His son, Zougourana, seized Tenkodogo and settled there; in his turn Zougourana's son, Naba Oubri, seized the Ouagadougou area and became master of the whole country. The eldest son of Yennenga had seized Fada and founded the present dynasty, but had been unable to impose his language or his tattoing patterns on the inhabitants. This explains the gifts sent to Gambaga, the cradle of the race, and to the naba of Fada, the eldest son of the family. Part of the autochtonous inhabitants, driven away by the Mossi invasion, withdrew to the southeast and became the Bousansé /Busansi/ and the Gourounsi; the other part, remaining in the country, were assimilated by the Mossi and learned the tongue of their conquerors. A son of Naba Oubri, Naba Namendé, seized Bélousa and its territory.

In the meantime, the naba of Tenkodogo died, leaving only one son who succeeded him. His family requested the naba of Bélousa to give them his own son, who became Kourita, representative after death, of the deceased naba of Tenkodogo. Kourita wished to return to his father in Bélousa, but the latter sent him word not to do so, and Kourita stopped at Zaoré, a day's march from Bélousa, where his immediate successors resided. It was only later that this dynasty came to settle in Koupéla, after defeating and expelling, with the help of the naba of Bélousa, the descendants of Naba Guigma who had settled in Gobro near Soulgou. This is how the province of Koupéla originated, and this is why the naba of Koupéla must be invested by his overlord, the naba of Bélousa.

701 When a chief assembled his men, no one stayed behind. Only the
721 women, children, invalids, and old men guarded the villages. Those
who had no horses formed the infantry; they were armed with bow
[411] and arrows, usually poisoned, and a large sword hung from the shoulder.
The horsemen carried a sword and a spear that rested on the tip of
the foot and was held at mid-height with the right hand. The Mossi
cavalry was especially numerous and fearful. The Moro Nâba stayed
[643] home when his people went to war. He gathered together as many
horses as possible, and, when horsemen lost their mounts, they came
to him to get another horse and rejoin the fight.

669 The last wars before the French conquest of Koupéla, which we shall describe briefly, were civil wars that took place either between the people of Tenkodogo and those of Koupéla, or between the Mossi and the Gourmantché.

669 /12/ As generally happened in parallel cases, these wars followed
the death of a naba, when several pretenders wrangled over the suc-
643 cession. It was in order to prevent such wars that only the immediate
entourage of the naba was informed of his death. Outsiders were to
remain in ignorance and believe the naba to be ill in his hut. The
fatal news was spread only when the head of the family had gathered
all that was necessary to honor the deceased in proper fashion by
celebrating the kouré. (5)

5. Kouré, funeral ceremony in honor of the dead. See below.

669 When Naba Kidba died, leaving only a child of five or six to succeed him, a man from Kazem'bouanga who was powerful by virtue of his wealth and the number of his men decided to seize the throne. His followers had taken for themselves the name of Kazem'bouanga and used to say: "Although the hyena (katré) is not the equal (zéma) of the donkey (bouanga), she nevertheless attacks and kills him if she meets him in the bush: similarly, although we are not as powerful as the inhabitants of Koupéla, we will manage to defeat them." And indeed, they marched on Koupéla. The prime minister, who bears the title, Saman'Naba (head of the outer courtyard), and whose own name was Wenkosgaraga, seized the child and fled with him to Sapara, the nearest village under the direct authority of the Moro Naba, located nine kilometers from Koupéla.

576 the chest with the hands half-closed and the thumbs raised, strike the ground together three or four times. The Mossi then raises his body a little and rubs the palms of his hands together. He never looks the person he is saluting straight in the face, but keeps his eyes slightly lowered. It is a truly humbled posture, especially when the chief who is being saluted remains standing or on horseback, towering above his subordinate, and barely according him a glance. The women, instead of beating upon the ground with their forearms, strike it with the elbows and raise their open hands, fingers extended, to shoulder height. The grand salute, very rarely used, consists of turning around after the ordinary salute has been completed, seizing some dust with both hands, spreading it on the forehead, and saluting once more.

When two natives who know each other meet along the way, the younger of the two squats first and begins the salute, which the other acknowledges by squatting in turn. If they are carrying loads, they set them down before saluting. They are never in a hurry. Servants and women, when they walk before a chief, bow slightly and join their hands in front of the chest, palms together. Though complicated, the Mossi salute is rendered easily and gracefully by the natives; they are used to it from an early age, and never perform it in the clumsy and awkward manner which is theirs when they attempt to imitate the military salute, so fine and noble when well done and so ludicrous when distorted by a Black.

622 Chiefs are designated by the generic term *naba*, but a distinction
643 is made between *naba* and *dimma*. The latter is elected /16/ according to very precise rules, which we shall mention later, and his authority stems directly from this election. There are only five *dimma* among the Mossi: the Moro Naba, and the nabas of Fada, Tenkodogo, Boussouma, and Yatenga. The *naba*, on the other hand, receives his power from another chief more powerful than himself who has chosen him from several candidates.

643 Mossi country lies wholly under the authority of the *Moro Naba*
645 who is assisted by five high ministers: the *Widi Naba*, *Laralé Naba*, *Gounga Naba*, *Kamisoro Naba* and *Ballum Naba*. The respective functions of these ministers are somewhat ill-defined. The Kamisoro
839 is a eunuch and chief of the eunuchs. Upon his death, since he leaves no heirs, all his property devolves to the Moro Naba. It was thus to the latter's advantage to make him wealthy and to present him with the finest district in the country. The Widi Naba takes the place of the Moro Naba from the time of his death until the investiture

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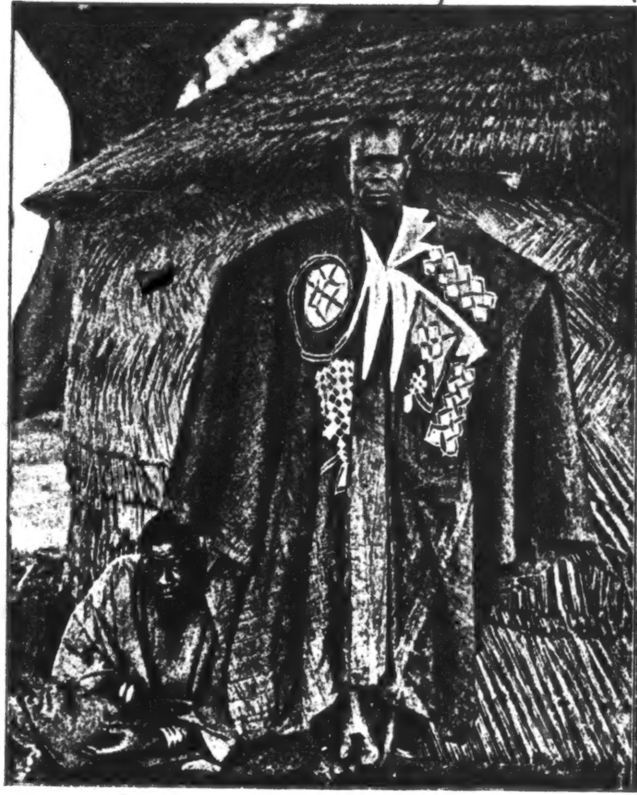

A Mossi Province Chief.

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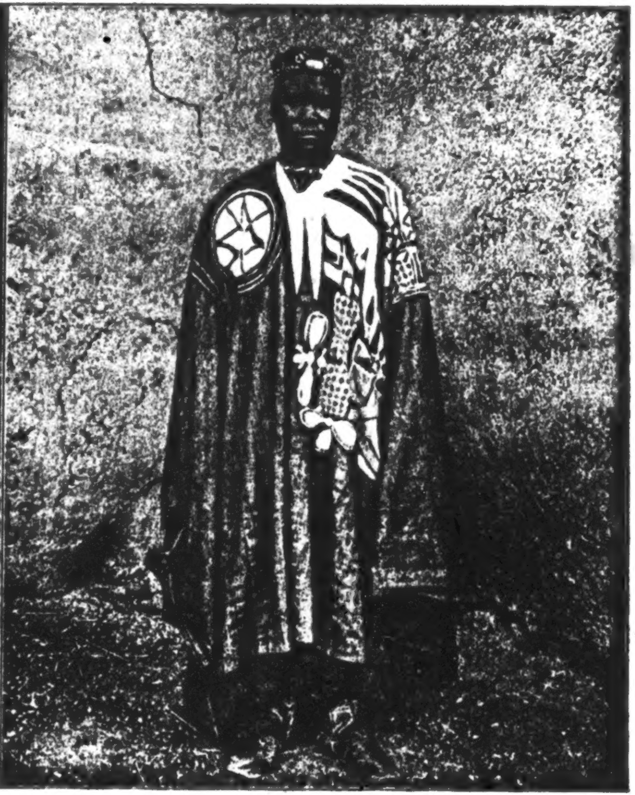

The Moro Naba of the Mossi.

2:Mangin--19a M-5 (ca. 1910) 1921 FA28 Mossi FA28

643 of his successor. He presides over the election and proclaims the newly elected chief. The Laralé is the guardian of the Moro Naba's ancestral tombs, and the Ballum is the head of the pages and dancers. When the Moro Naba gives one of his pages in marriage, the latter settles near the huts of the Ballum Naba. This is the least important minister; prior to the French occupation, he was given no province to rule.
645

631 The Moro Naba ruled directly over a large part of the Mossi territories. The part under his immediate jurisdiction was apportioned among his four principal ministers, who each had under him the heads of the cantons. Those territories not directly subject to the Moro Naba were placed under the authority of powerful chiefs who might be called province chiefs, assuredly vassals of the Moro Naba, but very independent vassals, somewhat similar to the dukes of Brittany and Burgundy vis-à-vis the King of France. Such are the nabas of Ouahigouya, Yako, Boussouma, Bélousa, etc.; there are many of them outside the territory reserved to the Moro Naba, especially to the north, east, and south. These province chiefs could also have independent vassals who, nevertheless, acknowledged their authority, such as the naba of Koupéla, a true province chief, but a vassal of the naba of Bélousa, in turn a vassal of the Moro Naba. The naba of Salmatenga stands in the same position with reference to the naba of Boussouma.

Each province is divided into cantons, each headed by a naba, and the canton includes several villages, each of which usually has its naba. Some of the villages are directly controlled by the province chief who apportions them among his ministers. Some villages may not even have a true naba. These are usually villages established by the children of an important naba. In this case an old man is entrusted with the administrative functions. These villages without a naba may nevertheless obtain one. For example, if the province chief has a son who settles in the community and the inhabitants are pleased with his presence, his father may name him naba of the village. A very few villages are ruled by women who are assisted by the elders when a case is to be judged.
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The power of each chief is tempered by his council. The Moro Naba himself does not act without consulting his ministers. Each province /17/ chief has a council. The titles of the ministers vary from one province to another, but their functions are the same.

631 The canton chiefs consult the oldest men in the village where they reside, and the village chiefs make no decisions bearing on the community without assembling the elders and listening to their advice.

Everything is carried out through the channels of the hierarchy. A province chief never transmits an order directly to a village ruled by a canton chief, but he advises the latter who notifies the village chief, and the village chief in turn calls the elders together, conveys the orders to them, and through them informs all his subjects. The orders passed down in this formal way are always carried out, but if perchance a canton chief should wish to disobey his province chief, he would be seconded by his people who recognize his authority before any other.

● 643 645 701 The last Moro Nabas had become to some extent idle kings. The protocol to which they were subjected by custom constantly encumbered them, not unlike European court etiquette. The Moro Naba was surrounded with a veritable court. As mentioned above, his High Council was composed of five chief ministers. To these should be added the Iman who represents the Moslems and who wields a certain influence, and the Teng'Soba. /Tr. Among the Mossi there is both a Teng'Soba, earth priest, and a Tan'Soba, war minister. It would seem that the latter is meant here./ The duties of the latter are quite specialized. He does not live in the same village as the Moro Naba, and he rules a canton. In case of war, he is consulted on the timeliness of the hostilities and on their chances of success. It devolves upon him at this time to make the proper sacrifices and to question the ancestral spirits. When war has been decided on, he takes command of the armies, and everyone, the ministers and the canton chiefs, must obey him. The Moro Naba remains in Ouagadougou.

644 839 A crowd of subalterns gravitate around these high dignitaries. The eunuchs are not very respectable people; sometimes habitual thieves were made eunuchs, as were, in general, those pages guilty of too much familiarity with the naba's wives. Some of them could reach a high position. The Kamisoro were always eunuchs, and several important cantons were set aside for them.

644 The pages are young boys, hand-picked from the country's most gifted children. They must serve the naba, and they bear the name soroné. The naba is never alone; he always has one or several pages by his side. One holds the fan, one stands near the monarch to help him shift his position, another takes care of his shoes, yet another of his scepter; the great cup-bearer constantly holds a gourd filled with strong millet beer and covered by a tray of artistically woven basketry.

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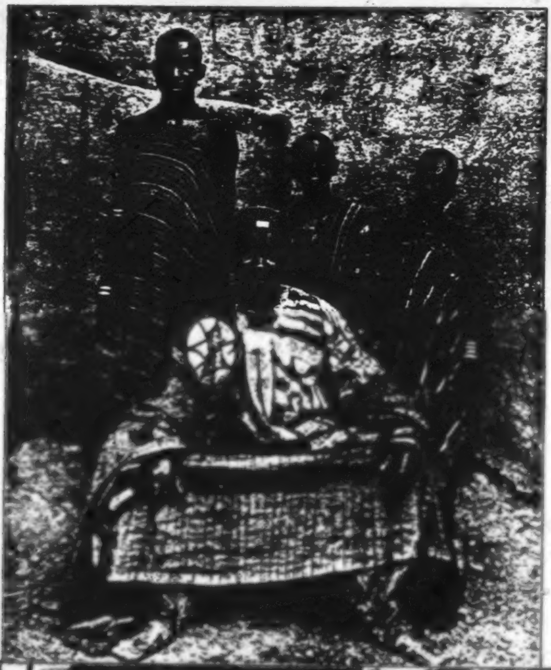

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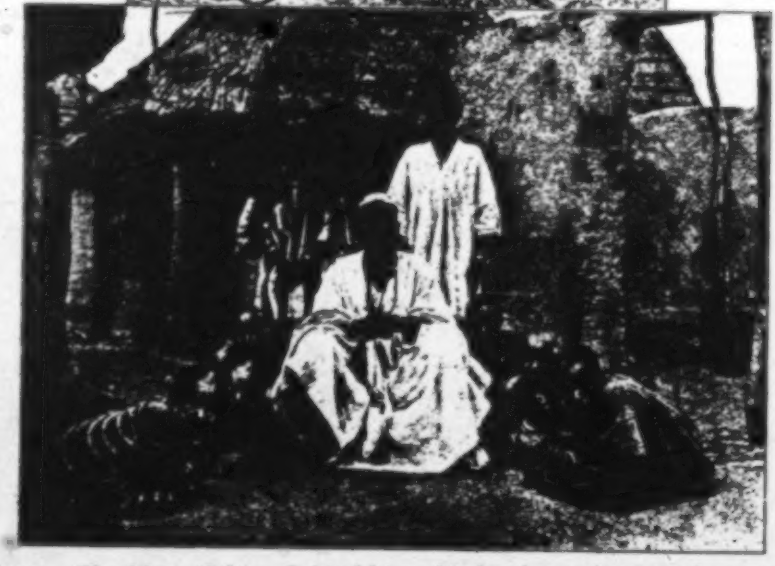

Above: The Moro Naba. Behind him, his brother, about twelve years old and the head of a large province, flanked by two pages.

Below: The Bullom Naba and his Pages. Behind him, his two Christian sons.

635 wear spurs and to have pages and a pillow. When the festivities are over at Kourit'Yaorin, the naba enters Koupéla where he is to reside.

643 When the Moro Naba died, the country fell prey to revolution and
669 to the servants of the deceased, who looted everything they could. This is why the death of the Moro Naba was carefully concealed until the day of the funeral; this is why, once it had been announced, no one dared go out without a bow and arrows or at least a spear. Women and children stayed home. In order to prevent any disorder, a new
643 election was called as soon as possible. The Widi Naba acted as intermediary and gathered the votes of the electors. The latter numbered twenty-five: the five high ministers and twenty other chiefs, of no great importance in everyday life, who were not canton chiefs and were often mere family heads, but who were high electors by right inherited from father to son since the founding of the Ouagadougou dynasty. These twenty-five electors consulted the people of their entourage and told the Widi Naba which candidate had received their vote. There could be several candidates, but to be elected one had to be a member of the family /22/of Naba Oubri, the founder of the dynasty. Once the funeral ceremonies were over, the Widi Naba rounded up all the canton chiefs and all the nabas present in Ouagadougou, and proclaimed the name of the man chosen, to whom he presented the badges of office. Numerous ceremonies followed, the most solemn of which took place in a small village called Paspanga, two kilometers from Ouagadougou. All the nabas went there in turn, beginning with the defeated candidates, to render their oath of loyalty.

All these customs were followed for the investiture of the present Moro Naba, Naba Kom.

Chapter 3. Rights of Chiefs and Rights of Private Individuals

631 The nabas, whether heads of villages, cantons, or provinces, were all-powerful, and no one could act without their knowledge or own anything beyond what they permitted him to possess.

In theory, Mossi country belongs entirely to the Moro Naba, who may dispose of everything as he wishes and give land to anyone he pleases. In practice, the Moro Naba delegates some of his

769 In addition to this kourita, if the deceased was head of the household, his oldest daughter, or in her absence, his granddaughter, [184] occasionally plays a role and is also called kourita, but this custom is less widespread. Her mourning clothes are embellished with thin cords of red straw (bini) around the neck and wrists and above the elbow and at the ankles, 13 for a man and 14 for a woman. Around her head she wears cotton threads (pana) which hang down her back like a long tail, ending in a pompon. The first kourita, previously mentioned, sometimes wears these badges also. This second kourita actually has only one task, namely, to plant large millet where her father's huts stood. When the millet is ripe, she sets it aside to use for preparing millet beer on the day of the kouré. Sometimes her position is held for three years, and she cannot shave during this time. To offset this, it is she who brews the beer for the Day of the Dead (basra). At the end of three years, she shaves and takes up her usual way of life. No such kourita is provided for an old woman, since she was not the head of a household.

A mother is kourita for a child who dies before he marries. She wears at her ankle a thin cotton cord to which she adds a knot daily [801] for the duration of mourning, 33 days for a boy, 44 days for a girl.

The Moro Naba has a kourita like other Mossi, but on the day of the kouré a young boy of his family is appointed to represent him for life. This kourita adopts the name of the dead naba, and all through the dry season he goes from canton to canton, as the true Moro Naba could not do in his lifetime. Everywhere he is greeted and entertained with great honors, he receives many gifts, and his men loot what they can. One place only is closed to him, Ouagadougou, the residence of his successor. If they were to meet, one of them would die within the year. At present there are among the Mossi two kourita of Moro Nabas: that of Naba Sanem, who welcomed Binger, and that of Naba Sigri, enthroned as a result of Voulet's conquest and deceased in 1905. Naba Wobro, deposed by our troops, has no kourita because he was [643] no longer Moro Naba when he died; he had failed tradition by leaving Ouagadougou and thereby renounced his rights as a sovereign.

/74/ The first funeral is a temporary expedient; the human body decomposes quickly, and the burial has to be held before all the friends and relatives can be assembled. Also, death comes by surprise; there are not enough cowries, the animals have not been gathered in sufficient numbers, and the deceased must be granted the honors due his rank, he must be offered numerous victims. These are the reasons

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tion and, when he arrived at the sparsely settled Ninisi village of Nobéré, he decided to stay and make it his home. The Ninisi ran away when they saw Biligo coming, but he persuaded them to return and live in peace under his command. The Tengsoba, or earth priest, of the village refused to return, and Biligo went into the bush and captured him so that the sacrifices to the earth shrines could continue as before. Biligo married a local woman and, when she bore him sons, he sent them to rule those villages not inhabited by the earth priests. These sons and their families formed the noble classes in the district. 173

About one hundred years ago a district chief called Peka supported the loser in a fight for the supreme chieftainship and was killed when the victorious pretender was installed as chief in Ouagadougou. The victor sent his son, Ngado, to rule over Nobéré and, although the relatives of Peka were scattered, the village chiefs were allowed to retain their posts. These chiefs did lose their noble status, however, because Ngado's sons who went to live in the villages formed the new nobility. The chiefs and their families were submerged into the commoner class. The history of Nobéré is typical of that of most of the Mossi districts and, today, one finds the remnants of many former ruling lineages scattered around the country. 173 565 631

The supreme ruler of the Mossi was called the Moro-naba. He possessed the *nam* which is the symbol of power, and because of this power he had the right of life and death over all his subjects. He also had a religious role in the country because it was his duty to initiate the yearly rites dedicated to the ancestors so that the country would have good crops, and so that the people would be happy and multiply. The Moro-naba was aided in his rule over the Mossi by five ministers who were responsible for the five provinces grouping 333 villages that made up the territory of the state. These ministers were responsible for the proper administration of the state, and they nominally elected the new Moro-naba. 643 [645]

As soon as the death of the ruler was announced, civil disorder broke out throughout the country and continued until the five ministers and the minister for war took fictive control of the country. When the funeral of the late chief was completed the chief minister, the Ouidi-naba, summoned the lesser ministers to a conference and told them that the country had no chief "because the fire had gone out" and that it now required one. He advised them to consider the qualifications of the late chief's son and of all the other pretenders, and to choose the most worthy individual. The lesser ministers refused to do this, saying: "You are our superior, and the right to make the choice rests on you alone."

The eldest son of the former ruler was usually elected Moro-naba but, as any member of the royal lineage up to the third degree was eligible, many persons tried to bribe the elector. When the Ouidi-naba made his choice he told the minister of war: "My mind is not at ease because I fear that those whose hopes have not been fulfilled will resort to violence."

643 The war minister replied, "That will be against tradition and justice to the dead ruler. Do not fear; I am here with my arms to see that your decision is respected" (this was not always an empty gesture, for one man, Wobogo, forced a Ouidi-naba to elect him).[3] When the lesser ministers were notified as to the choice of the new sovereign they said: "You have expressed our will and the will of all the people." The elector then secretly called the new ruler and, taking off the man's goat's skin (the symbol of those seeking the chieftainship) told him: "I am giving you the house of your father and of your grandfather." Then the ministers and the chief musician escorted the new ruler before his subjects, and the Ouidi-naba shouted: "Here is he who has the power of life and death over you." The following day all the members of the ruling lineage and sublineages swore not to betray their new ruler. The minister of war then swore, in the name of all the people, to protect the new ruler with his life if the need ever arose. Next followed ceremonies during which a descendant of the original Ninisi inhabitants made sacrifices, in the name of the new sovereign, to his ancient ancestors.

643 642 [778] In analyzing the power of the Moro-naba we must take into consideration the concept of *nam* which is described as "power" or "the force of God." It is this force of God that enables one man to control another, and gives the sovereign the power of life and death over his subjects. Moreover, once a man had "eaten the *nam*," the Mossi constitution had no provisions for deposing him. The Mossi generally claim that only one of their thirty-three rulers was ever deposed, and that he was the ruler who ran away from the French. However, there is another tradition that states that one sovereign, Karfo, was forced to commit suicide by his Ouidi-naba.

According to the Mossi constitution, the Moro-naba had complete control over the lands of the state, and was the only one empowered to distribute these lands as fiefs. Any attack on the lands of the state was an attack on the Moro-naba and thus a cause for war. The Moro-naba alone had the right to make war, and in this he was helped by his vassals, the district chiefs, and their armies. He was court of final appeal for crimes that carried the death penalty and, theoretically, only he had the right to condemn a nobleman to death.

651 686 Every year the district chiefs under the command of their ministers went to the capital to pay allegiance to the Moro-naba with gifts of cows, goats, sheep, cowries, and grain. The animals were presents from the stock of the district chiefs, but the cowries and grain were collected from the villagers of the districts. The people of the several wards in the capital furnished labor for the cultivation of the sovereign's fields and for the upkeep of his houses. The Moro-naba received substantial sums of money from taxes on the sale of slaves or other merchandise in the Ouagadougou market. He also received presents of slaves when his vassals raided the surrounding countries. If a district chief failed to fulfill all of these

175 at La and waged a series of battles in the Yako region. Naba Koutou, twenty-eighth successor of Oubry, fought in the Sourgou region (Kipirsi). And finally, during the last few years preceding our occupation, Naba Sanom and Bokary Koutou attacked the village of Lallé.

●643 631 According to Moulins' data, it was Naba Koundoumié, sixth successor of Oubry, who set three of his sons as heads of the Boussouma, Béloussa and Yako provinces. He made them veritable monarchs who were united to the Moro Naba by a mere bond of vassalage, as was already the case with the chief of Tenkodogo.

Moulins adds, "As a rule, the chiefs of vassal provinces do not seem to have given much thought to enfranchisement from the Moro Naba's suzerainty, which actually did not weigh heavily upon them. We must come all the way to modern times, to Sanom's reign, to find signs of a struggle between the sovereign and the chiefs of Boussouma and Béloussa.

"On the other hand, the important vassals sometimes resorted to the Moro Naba's support to strengthen their authority within their own provinces. We have just mentioned the expeditions directed against Yako. Tradition has also preserved the memory of a series of battles waged by Dawoéma, eighth successor of Oubry, against the Boussansé of Garango who attempted to free themselves from Tenkodogo Naba."

174 Following this brief glance at the history of the Mossi empire, there remain, or should remain, three questions to investigate.

1. The remote origins of the Mossi proper, the conquering Mossi who came from Dagomba to Tenkodogo and then to Ouagadougou. At the present day, however, these origins are unknown. They might be uncovered by studying the Mossi language and comparing it systematically with the ancient or present tongues of north, east, and west Africa. I do not believe that such a piece of research is forthcoming, however. /464/ The Mossi might also be studied from the standpoint of physical anthropology, in which case two distinct studies ought to be made, one of the chiefs and nobles, another of the bulk of the Mossi population. The results would then be compared with those obtained for other populations of north and west Africa. Like the one previously mentioned, however, this would be a tremendous project which is not likely to be undertaken in the near future.

593 672 to guard against dangers resulting from the obligation to make reparation for injuries committed by one of its members. This has led naturally to a recognition of the family's right, in the person of its head, to take whatever measures are necessary for the preservation of its common interests. Prior to our occupation, such measures could go as far as putting in irons or even putting to death an individual who called upon the collective responsibility of the family too frequently or too onerously, and thus threatened to endanger its equilibrium. The decision of a family head involving the [643] death sentence or putting in irons for life for one of his people, however, only became final with the *naba*'s approval. The latter could oppose it by assuming financial responsibility, in the family's stead, for all future misdemeanors committed by the person he had pardoned."

593 174 We come now to an interesting although extremely ticklish subject, namely, the causes of the partial decommunalization of the Mossi family.

If we look at the present workaday life of these people, their decommunalization seems inexplicable in view of the fact that we are dealing with a group of cultivators, somewhat indolent to be sure, but nevertheless cultivators first and foremost. The Mossi, on the other hand, are not herdsmen. They are very mediocre stockbreeders. Among them as among other Blacks of West Africa, hunting merely accounts for a small percentage of their total food-producing activities. They are not traders, either. We see nothing here, therefore, that might explain the decommunalization of the family, and we must refer back to the previous workaday life of this people. We saw earlier, however, that while the present Mossi population originated /554/ from the fusion of two disparate elements, one of those elements was similar to the Bobo, Gourounsi, Habé, Kipirsi, etc., and thus deeply communal and patriarchal. It is obviously not from this element that the present decommunalization might stem.

Fortunately, there exists another and very different element. The Mossi who came from the Dagomba were, as we know, Blacks who were 1) warriors and conquerors, 2) breeders of horses, no doubt,

567 Dagomba conquest. Both family type and slave status, indeed, re-
326 fer back to the Bobo, Gourounsi, etc.

000 We come now to public powers. We refer the reader to
Appendix 32 /not translated/ for a study of property regulations
and neighborhood relations, and plunge forthwith into the study of
public powers.

631 We already know that the Mossi political organization is cen-
tralized. The villages belong to cantons, which are in turn gathered
into provinces under direct administration or into mere vassal prov-
inces. At the summit of the hierarchy stands the king, the Moro
Naba, the supreme chief of the Mossi, who lives at Ouagadougou.
To give an idea of the former importance, or at least relative im-
portance, of this empire, we shall state that in the Ouagadougou
[162] circle alone there were eight provinces including among them 300
cantons, 5,000 villages or small towns, and 861,700 inhabitants.

643 Let us begin our description of this political organism with the
head, that is, with the Moro Naba.

Moro Naba means "chief of the Mossi," from *naba*, "chief"
and *Moro* or *Mora* which means Mossi in the singular. *Moro* yields
Mossi or *Mossé* in the plural. (The French have grown accustomed
to saying "one Mossi, several Mossi," but this is a barbarism and
one should /568/ actually say, "one Moro, several Mossi," just as
one says, "one Gourounga, several Gourounsi," "one Kipirga, sev-
eral Kipirsi," etc.). As for the word for "chief," it is both *naba*
and *soba* in Mossi. *Naba* seems to be the word brought by the con-
[192] quering Mossi-Dagomba group, while *soba* is probably the word that
was used by the autochtonous population to designate chiefs.

645 Prior to the French conquest, the Moro Naba was surrounded by
a certain number of ministers or eminent dignitaries who were
given 1) specific duties /at court/, 2) in addition, part of the
territory to govern. This is what accounted for provinces over and
above the cantons, at least in those areas that were administered
directly, but the heads of those provinces did not reside there.
They lived at Ouagadougou, and were first and foremost ministers
of the Moro Naba.

They were:

644 who will make him into a sorone if he is a boy, or alone have the right to give her in marriage if she is a girl."

● 143 Moulins also provides interesting details on the manner in which the Moro Naba spends his days, or rather spent them in the past, for this description refers to the state of affairs prior to the French occupation.

"From Ouarga's reign onward, the Moro Nabas, who had previously resided successively in various parts of the empire, settled at Ouagadougou where they have lived ever since. Custom constrains them never to leave /571/ the capital except in unusually serious circumstances. This is because the land falls into anarchy [674 when the sovereign is absent from Ouagadougou. All theft, pillage, 696] and murder committed at that time remain unprosecuted.

644 173 "Every morning at seven, the Moro Naba emerges from his hut. His saddled horse waits before the door. He mounts it and pretends to set out on his way, but after riding around his hut he dismounts and goes back into his hut only to come out again immediately.

"This formality of the protocol has the following origin. A long time ago the favorite wife of the Moro Naba having fled to La, the sovereign wished to go and fetch her himself. He mounted his horse and was about to leave when all the court dignitaries rushed to him, admonishing him not to carry out his project, for his absence from Ouagadougou could only result in anarchy. The monarch gave way, and soon afterwards his wife returned of her own accord. It is in memory of the magnanimity of this sovereign, who sacrificed himself in the interests of his people, that every morning since that time the Moro Naba has pretended to prepare for departure and to then give up his plan.

644 "Following this ceremony, the Moro Naba settles himself in a recess sunk into the wall that surrounds his residence, and then, to the strains of abundant music, the whole court comes to the sovereign and prostrates itself before him, brow in the dust, forearms striking the ground in rhythm with a great clicking of bracelets. Then business is attended to.

"First, the five province chiefs come forward in order of precedence, relate to the Moro Naba those events which have taken place since the preceding day, and receive his instructions for the day. Then they present to him the canton and village chiefs and the common natives who wish for an audience.

664 "The wives of the Moro Haba never give birth or raise their
554 children at his own place of residence, but only in one of the eunuch villages. In theory they do not stand above the wives of common natives, but in practice they enjoy high consideration among the Mossi, like all that is connected with the Moro Naba.

"The sons of the sovereign, once weaned, are entrusted to a province or canton chief who is put in charge of their education.
[582] At the age of ten they are married and settled in a village, where they live, surrounded by a court, but without necessarily being given a territorial command.

"The prerogatives attached to the title of Moro Naba's son are vast as long as the monarch is alive. They grant the right to steal, to loot, and even to kill with impunity.

"Upon the death of the Moro Naba, his sons become mere nakomsé (sons of chiefs) whose position nevertheless remains quite privileged.

643 "One of the sons of the deceased sovereign, however, is granted
644 special privileges. At the death of the Moro Naba, the latter's wives elect one of his young sons who adopts his name and, so to
554 speak, perpetuates him. He has no /territorial/ command, but he is surrounded by a court similar to that of the Moro Naba, he enjoys respect almost equal to that paid to the latter, and he is a sacred figure. No one has the right to contradict him or to harm him.

644 "As for the Moro Naba's daughters, although in principle they
554 do not stand above ordinary Mossi girls, in practice they are treated with the strictest respect by all natives. Once married, they have almost complete freedom of action vis-à-vis their husband, and they often take advantage of this to lead a most unruly existence.

643 "When the Moro Naba's death has been verified, his burial is
766 carried out and followed by the funeral ceremonies, which are held in the same fashion as for a common native, with the sole difference /574/ that they have more brilliance and that the sacrifices are more sizable.

642 "For the whole duration of the interregnum, the land falls into
672 a state of complete anarchy. Everyone has the right to kill, loot, and steal as he pleases. Convicts who are serving sentence are fully pardoned and set free.

643 "Following the funeral ceremony, an electoral college consisting of the Ouidi Naba as president, assisted by the Gounga Naba, Laralé Naba, and Tamsaba, assembles in the greatest mystery and holds its meetings in a spot as withdrawn or inconspicuous as possible. Owing to the reigning state of anarchy, indeed, the followers of the various candidates would not fail to disturb the deliberations of the electoral college if they were to find out where it is meeting, and to support the candidacy of their respective favorites with arrow shots.

"When the members of the college have come to an agreement on the choice of the new sovereign (who can only be selected among the direct descendants of Oubry, founder of the empire) they secretly warn the chosen man, who also comes to them in secret. Then each of the four electors convokes his warriors, who come and gather around them and the new Moro Naba. On the following morning the informed populace flocks in, and the sovereign is proclaimed king.

"The disturbances of the interregnum come to an end from that moment.

"The Moro Naba, followed by the high dignitaries and the multitude, goes to Tamvilli (a quarter of Ouagadougou), where he spends the first day of his reign. When evening comes, he goes to the chief of the village of Ouagadougou where he spends the night. On the following morning he goes to Paspanga (a quarter of Ouagadougou) where, on the spot where the dwelling of Naba Kom once stood, he receives the canton chiefs and nakomsé, who come and render their oath of fealty. Finally, when this last formality is over, the members of the electoral college depart, and he proceeds along with the Baloum Naba, Kamsoro Naba, and Jussaba Naba to the royal residence.

"The unlucky /575/ pretenders are subjected to the most cruel banter throughout the coronation ceremonies, but once these are over they become kourita, or in other words the highest-ranking nakomsé.

643
669 "We have already stated that as soon as the Moro Naba is proclaimed sovereign, the disturbances of the interregnum come to an end. Mossi history records but a single case where the decision

643 669 of the electoral college was not accepted by the populace and disturbances occurred in spite of the proclamation of the king-elect. This was when Naba Sagha, the son of Naba Kom, was chosen. The people would have liked to see Kaoko, son of Naba Zombéré, nominated. Dissatisfied because the sovereign of their choice had not reached the throne, they would not acknowledge the man chosen by the college. The new monarch managed to take over the throne only after waging a bloody battle at the head of his followers against his unlucky rival.

645 635 The province chiefs who are ministers are nominated by the Moro Naba, who selects the man most deserving of the succession among the closest relatives of the chief to be replaced. Province chiefs enjoy considerable power in the administration of their provinces, they are surrounded with a large court, but they stand under the direct control of the Moro Naba.

635 It must be added that aside from the five provinces lying under the direct rule of the Moro Naba of Ouagadougou, there were four others (Boussouma and Béloussa to the northeast, Yako to the northwest, Tenkodogo to the southeast) that were mere vassal provinces and that actually enjoyed nearly complete autonomy prior to our occupation. Tenkodogo province was especially important.

The chiefs of these /latter/ provinces were true monarchs selected in the same fashion as the Moro Naba by the electoral college of their province. Once elected, they enjoyed all the prerogatives of sovereignty, nominating the canton chiefs and administering their provinces as they saw fit.

Their power was as absolute in their own sphere as that of the Moro Naba over the whole of his subject provinces, but they acknowledged [631] his sovereignty and offered him a gift as a token of their vassalage at the time when their powers were handed over to them.

634 621 /576/ Within the subject provinces, the canton chiefs were nominated by the Moro Naba on the basis of an introduction by the province chief. They were always selected among the closest relatives of the chief they were to replace, always descendants of Oubry, the first Moro Naba. They stood under the direct orders of the province chief, whom they had to use as an intermediary to communicate with the Moro Naba. It was their task to proceed with

651 "Market-place dues were levied by the Dara Haba, for the sovereign's account, on the markets surrounding Ouagadougou. The Moro Naba also got the tusks of elephants and one haunch of every buffalo or koba killed by hunters.

643 651 425 "Furthermore, the right of confiscation which the sovereign could use for his own benefit without any precise rule imperatively limiting the conditions under which he could exercise it, permitted him to augment, whenever needed, the revenue derived from his usual sources.

651 "Province chiefs, in turn, had the right to demand, through the canton chiefs, whatever they needed for the support of their families and retinues. Canton chiefs held the same rights over the villages within their rule. The village chiefs themselves received from their subjects a certain number of gifts."

692 Justice was rendered as follows: /580/

1. By the family heads, aided by the family elders.
2. By the village chiefs, aided by the village elders.
3. By the canton chiefs, aided by the elders of their own quarter.
4. By the province chiefs, aided by the elders of their own quarter and by the dignitaries of their entourage.
5. By the Moro Naba, aided by his ministers and the dignitaries of his entourage.

"The respective competence /legal authority/ of those various jurisdictions," says Moulins, "were in no way clearly determined or defined. The deed and the circumstances alone were taken into account in bringing up before a certain authority a matter which the lower jurisdiction had proved unable to resolve. A matter which the family council had been unable to solve was brought before the village chief, then the canton chief, the province chief, and finally the Moro Naba.

694 "Justice was free of charge in the sense that procedural expenses were unknown, but custom demanded that a litigant should never appear before a judge empty handed. He had to offer him at least a white chicken. The outcome of a trial must often have depended on the greater or lesser generosity displayed by the respective sides."

793 never offers sacrifices himself to the Earth at Ouagadougou, nor does
174 he have them offered by the Gandé Naba, his minister of religion. He entrusts with this task the Ouagadougou Naba, who is a grandson of the autochtonous inhabitants and thus favorably regarded by the local divinities. Similarly, when the Moro Naba sacrifices to the hillocks surrounding Ouagadougou, he entrusts the local chief with the offerings and the physical sacrifice. Now, what the Moro Naba still does at Ouagadougou was no doubt done by other Mossi chiefs throughout the land after conquest, once the submission of the autochtonous inhabitants had been ensured by force of arms. Hence, the institution of the Tensoba.

One might object that Earth chiefs are also to be found in Gourounsi territory, although the Gourounsi are independent. We know, however, that the present-day Gourounsi cantons were not the achievement of the Gourounsi themselves but of minor Mossi dynasties established in the territory. Under the circumstances, the same substitution of conquering chiefs for conquered chiefs has occurred there as in Mossi territory, with the same consequences.

793 "The Tensoba," says Marc, p. 157, "whose title means 'Master of the Earth,' stands in opposition to the naba who is a military chief....

"The Tensoba is the indispensable mediator between the ancestors and their living descendants. It is he who conducts the funeral ceremonies and who decides on the honors to be rendered on the Day of the Dead. It is to him that one appeals in case of an epidemic or any public misfortune, since misfortunes are always due to the evil inclinations of ancestors that must be allayed."

793 /596/ Actually, the institution of the Earth chief does not strip
643 the village and canton chiefs of all religious powers. In some areas,
839 as Marc pointed out, the Earth chiefs have gradually vanished, and
778 the political chiefs have become religious chiefs as well. They per-
[431] form sacrifices on the bara's advice, without failing to make a gift of some sort (100 or 1,000 cowries) to the latter also. By the same token and up to a point, the Moro Naba is invested with a religious character and with religious attributes. It is he, as we have already seen, who orders the performance of sacrifices to the Earth, to the hills. Every year during the dry season, he has a donkey sacrificed to Naba Koutou, a former Moro Naba, in the hut where the latter is buried. Prior to our occupation it was a eunuch who performed

793 the sacrifice and killed the donkey. He also slit the throat of a
643 horse, a beef, and a sheep. (This eunuch in charge of guarding the
839 tomb was called by the name of Naba Koutou, and in a way per-
778 petuated the deceased Moro Naba. He was granted special privi-
leges. If a man who was condemned to death ran away and reached
the tomb, he was safe but became the eunuch's slave. Similarly,
[567] a captive who ran away from his master gained his freedom from the
latter if he reached the grave, but became the slave of Naba Koutou.
Finally, at that time, it was forbidden to ride by the hut on a donkey.
Naba Koutou would seize the donkey, or at least demand a ransom
in cowries before returning it. This applied to any animals who ran
astray near the tomb. The tomb still exists nowadays, along with
the Naba Koutou who watches over it, but the latter no longer enjoys
the same privileges.)

793 We saw earlier that the Moro Naba had a sort of minister of the
645 cult in the person of the Gandé Naba, high priest and sacrificer.
There was also the Pouy Naba, or chief of the fetisheers, whose
function was probably to mediate between the Mossi bara and
timisoba as a whole and the central authorities.

782 Let us close this study of Mossi religion, which incidentally is quite incomplete and a mere outline, with a few words on the human sacrifices that were performed /597/ in the territory prior to our occupation, and a few words on circumcision as well.

782 "Human sacrifices," says Marc., p. 156, "definitely took place
766 among the Mossi up to the time when we occupied the territory.
Whenever a Moro Naba died at Ouagadougou, one of his wives and
one of his horses were sent to Gambaga in order to be sacrificed on
the tomb of Ouidiraogo (?) who is regarded as the mother of the first
Moro Naba. Soon after the occupation of Ouagadougou by the French,
782 the dethroned Moro Naba, Boukary Koutou, ordered the sacrifice of a
754 black rooster, a black goat, a black donkey, a black beef, and a
black slave on one of the mountains overlooking the White Volta.
This, it seems, was bound to cause the immediate death of the new
Moro Naba enthroned by Voulet."

304 As for circumcision, the Mossi circumcise boys and excise girls.

Boys are circumcised when they are from eight to twelve years old, and thirty or forty of them are circumcised at one time. The

596 In the sense of integration, we must mention primarily the families
592 of great chiefs. For example, there is the family of Gombiraogo, a
182 former Baloum Naba, a very wealthy and important personage. He
591 has five brothers. Two of them live together in the village of Kalo
and another two, similarly, in the village of Bembéla. Gombiraogo
lives in Ouahigouya with the fifth brother. With this brother he has three
zaka where 70 or 80 people live, all of whom work for him and form
a single work group under his direction (that is to say, during the rainy
season they work for him two days out of three, and during the dry
season they do so only when he has exceptional need of them; in return,
he provides them with food seven months out of twelve, according to custom,
and does not provide them with clothes unless they
are unmarried).

What should be noted here is the strength of this work group (70 to 80 people). As a result, it includes several compounds, while it is the compound as a rule that contains several or at least two work groups.

245] The present Baloum Naba, the prime minister, likewise has two zaka working for him. Moreover, the total family of the Baloum Naba is not assembled in Ouahigouya but scattered throughout Yatenga.

●643] In the same connection, the Rassam Naba has a zaka of 157 people who form a single work group under his direction. In return, he provides them with food all year.

294 /232/ Again, there is a zaka of shoemakers at Ouahigouya which
includes nearly 100 people altogether, among them 15 or 20 full-
592 grown men, all of them shoemakers. They all work for the zakasoba,
182 who provides them all with food. This zaka, of exceptional
numerical strength, is at the same time completely integrated.

596 At the other end of the scale, we find the Mossi family of Yatenga
evolving toward complete disintegration in certain parts of the terri-
182 tory, that is to say, evolving toward a state of affairs where nothing
592 remains except the total family on the one hand and the single
household on the other (that is, the compound has only a single
household).

Thus, in the course of a journey through the canton of Ratenga, I noted in the village of Tangué a family of 110 persons distributed among 14 homes. This gives an average of only seven or eight persons per home. In Kargo (another village) there are five Mossi families for 22 homes sheltering 181 persons, or only eight persons per home.

593 562 The wife must obey her husband. The latter has the right to strike her in case of disobedience, adultery, etc. He cannot break one of her limbs, or kill her.

595 Polygamy. —Polygamy is the general rule, at least theoretically. That is to say, the Mossi may have as many spouses as he wishes as long as he can minister to their needs.

595 589 In actual fact, only rich people have several wives. The majority are monogamous by necessity, and there are even bachelors. As a passing remark, this applies to the Sudanese Negroes in general, for everywhere nature creates approximately as many men as women, and it is hard to visualize how in any one region each man could have several wives. However, in spite of the occurrence of bachelors and a large number of truly monogamous people, the question still stands. It is solved if we bear in mind that girls are married much earlier than men. This results in a much larger number of women than men "in active service, " if I may be permitted to say so. Undoubtedly, this (along with the occurrence of bachelors and a considerable number of monogamists), takes care of the objection which naturally arises when we speak of polygamy. /243/

163 It may be, let us add, that the number of girls born here is a little higher than that of boys, as has been noted in England, for example.

595 643 645 By way of figures on polygamy, let us state that the Moro Naba Bango, the last one who reigned before the arrival of the French, had about 80 wives. The Naba Koboga, who ruled from 1902 to 1914, had 30 or 40. The present Rassam Naba, one of the ministers of the Moro Naba, has 30 or 35 wives. These are, of course, exceptional figures if the total population of Yatenga is taken into account. In any case, the rich men, notables, and men in easy circumstances always have several wives.

595 Organization of the polygamous household. —"The first wife, " says Vadier, "enjoys a certain authority over the others. It is she who transmits her husband's orders to the other wives and who notifies him of their wants, who supervises the preparation of meals and apportions the food. In addition, it is she who comes and tells the [844] husband that such-and-such a wife is no longer in a state of zim and can now fulfill her conjugal duties.

"Aside from this special prerogative enjoyed by the first wife, all wives have the same rights and duties. In principle, each wife must share in turn her husband's bed. Nevertheless, he is free to summon his favorite wife during the day. "

562 428 When she dies, a woman's property goes to her children. The objects used by women go to the daughters (bracelets, skirt cloths), while other items (animals, etc.) go to the sons. More exactly, the first-born is favored among the sons and the oldest girl among the daughters. If there are no children, the husband does not take anything, and whatever the wife leaves goes to her family, to her sisters and brothers in the first line of descent. Not having had any children by the deceased, the husband would be ashamed to take what she left.

837 Adultery. —The wife owes faithfulness to her spouse. Unfaithfulness, however, is not very important, for unless it occurs repeatedly, it does not usually result in a break. The husband merely beats his wife and scolds her.

837 684 782 769 When the wife has fled to a lover, her husband goes in search of her. The lover will have to provide a sheep (the sheep may be replaced by a goat), a chicken, and two canari of dolo, all of which are to be sacrificed to the ancestors so they will forgive the woman. She cannot re-enter her house until the sacrifice has been performed; without it the ancestors would kill her. They are unbending, more so than the husband to be sure, about the latter's honor. Should a husband know his wife to be guilty and do nothing about it, the ancestors would be furious and they would kill him, hence the necessity for action on the husband's part.

837 684 If the husband cannot find his runaway wife, the duty of searching for her and bringing her back to him falls to his father-in-law.

Formerly, before the French occupation, if the lover did not want to return the woman, her father appealed to the naba, that is, the chief of the village or canton, or even to the Moro Naba, who sent horsemen to arrest the guilty pair. He restored the wife to her husband and confiscated for his own benefit the lover's animals and millet granaries.

Nowadays, since the French occupation, one appeals to the commanding officer of the circle and to the native provincial court for the wife's return.

684 643 Sometimes, in the past, the husband killed his wife's lover when he caught him flagrante delicto. He had the right to do so, but this caused him to lose his /246/ wife who became the property of the Moro Naba. The lover's property likewise reverted to the Moro Naba.

684 643 565 In any event, the husband did not have the right to kill his wife except when she was caught flagrante delicto, unless he was the

684 ●643 565 Moro Naba or a member of the aristocracy. When one of his wives deceived him, the Moro Naba had her killed along with her lover. The guilty pair were strangled with cotton bands. Concerning the nakomsé /descendants of nabas/, the true nakomsé (for the descendants of Naba Rawa and Naba Yadega are no longer considered nakomsé at the present day and have reverted to the mass of the common people), the true nakomsé related to royalty since the time of Naba Nabacéré (1625-1655) and his descendants, Pigo (1720-1739) and Kango (1754-1787), when one of their wives had deceived them, they appealed first to the Basi Naba, head of the nakomsé, and presented the guilty pair to him. The Basi Naba sent them on to the Moro Naba, who had the woman and her lover strangled. The lover's property went to the Rassam Naba, chief of the people of Bingo who were in charge of the execution. The same procedure applied when the people of Bingo (house slaves of the Moro Naba) executed the wife of a Moro Naba and her lover. The property, which could not with decency revert to the deceived Moro Naba, went to the Rassam Naba, chief of Bingo.

837 684 Just as the wife owes faithfulness to her husband, the husband owes faithfulness to his wife or wives. Violations of this rule are frequent, however, and the husband's escapades are far less important than those of the wife. In all events, the husband's infidelity never entails annulment of the marriage. Although the wives do not have the right to say much when their husband deceives them (provided he does not install his concubine in the conjugal household, and this in fact never happens), they do have two possibilities of revenge. The first is very rarely used by the Mossi women of Yatenga. It consists of notifying the husband of the woman with whom their husband is deceiving them. This results in more or less serious trouble for their husband. If their husband ventures to take into his hut for awhile a woman who does not belong to him, it may happen (and this occurs more frequently) that his wives will gather, wait for the guilty woman at the door of the soukala, and give her a good thrashing when she comes out. The husband cannot say anything to them. He himself is protected, so to speak, by his status as a husband and left outside the argument, but revenge is taken on his unlucky accomplice, and while nothing is said to him, he can do nothing to protect her.

586 Divorce. —Divorce occurs in Yatenga more frequently than among the Bambara for reasons which were explained above. Here are the

593 861 858 The right to discipline a child belongs principally to the father (but also to the heads of work group, compound, and family) or to the mother, depending on the age of the child.

"The mother," says Vadier, "has the right to discipline boys until they are circumcised, girls until they marry. This does not mean that the father cannot intervene during that time to reprimand or chastise one of his children, but that he nearly always leaves it to the mother.

"After the boy's circumcision and the girl's marriage, the right to punish belongs to the father and no longer to the mother."

593 858 672 The duty of surveillance belongs principally to the father, and secondly to the heads of the work group, compound, and family. One of its consequences is financial liability. If a child steals or commits some reprehensible act which may call for compensation, the father is primarily responsible and must indemnify the injured parties, after seizing whatever property the child may own.

593 858 843 Formerly, when a native could not manage to discipline a son or daughter whose behavior was very bad, he would hand the child over to the Moro Naba after consulting the family head and the family council. From that day forward he would give up his paternal authority, and the Moro Naba alone would hold it with broader prerogatives. If the child continued to commit extortion, the Moro Naba had the right to have him put to death. When it was a girl who was handed to the naba, the latter would give the father a woman of his own household in exchange if he happened to be favorably disposed toward him.

Now, since the French occupation, this is no longer done. In such cases, nowadays, the child is simply expelled from the compound and from the household.

858 593 A father could not give his child as security, nor could he pawn him temporarily as a slave.

593 429 858 Paternal authority is relinquished in two cases, actually very infrequent: (1) when the father goes insane; and (2) when he has committed incest.

In such a case, paternal authority passes to his oldest living brother, or, if there is no brother, to the oldest son. This guardian has exactly the same powers over the child as the father had.

858 In case of insanity, the children are required to help their father and mother /258/ and to attend to their needs. In case of incest, they have no obligations toward the guilty party.

TRADITIONAL AND MODERN PATTERNS OF SUCCESSION TO POLITICAL OFFICE AMONG THE MOSSI OF THE VOLTAIC REPUBLIC*

ELLIOTT P. SKINNER

643 A characteristic of kingship shared by early European monarchies and many African societies has been the hazardous interregnum. In Europe this period was a time of shifting loyalties, intrigues, and bargained alliances; and the people's cry "the king is dead long live the king" was uttered without pause as if to abolish a hiatus that made them uneasy. The European monarchy later developed a strength and stability which enabled a king to pass on succession quietly to his heir. In African societies where the political power of the court was not strong, and the line of succession was not clearly delineated, the attempt was made to avoid a hazardous interregnum by keeping the people ritually ignorant of the death of a king. Only when the electors were ready to choose his successor were the people told of their monarch's [662 669] demise. Even then, there was some real or ritual violence as the numerous candidates vied for the vacant office.[1] Africans have themselves interpreted these stormy interregnums as being valuable for their societies. According to Oberg, in the Ankole Kingdom of Uganda, "The Bahima demanded that the strongest of the king's sons should be their leader and that the test should be one of war. The brothers must fight among themselves until one of them alone remained alive in Ankole Kingdom of Uganda to claim the drum and the mugabeship."[2] Other African populations believed that violent interregnums served to convince the people that a ruler was necessary. The Mossi of the Western Sudan was one of those societies which had a difficult interregnum. [121] In this paper I shall try to show that this pattern coinciding as it did, with a flexibility of succession to power among the ruling group, enabled this population to elect capable rulers before European conquest, helped them to insure the continuity of the ruling dynasty under European domination, and is now serving them in good stead during a period of transition to effective independence

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during a period of transition to effective independence. 000

The Mossi have the unique distinction of having preserved their 173 ethnic identity and political autonomy throughout all the vicissitudes of Sudanese history until conquered by the French on September 1, 1896. The origin of Mossi society is couched in mythological terms. According to their tradition they came from Dagomba in the Gold Coast (present day Ghana) sometime during the 11th or 12th century and moved northward towards the Niger River. During this migration they carved out three large kingdoms and many small principalities by conquering and absorbing some of the indigenous Ninisi and Foulse and Dogon populations, and by chasing the others into the cliffs of Bandiagara. In 1328, according to Es Sadi in the *Tarikh es Soudan*, the Mossi attacked, burned, and sacked Timbuktu, then held by Mali, and during the following century attacked Walata and Banku. They received their first setback by the Ali, and were severely beaten by Askia the Great, the usurper of the Songhoi throne, who lead a *jihad* against them in 1499. But their attacks into the Niger bend did not cease until the Moroccans became masters of Timbuktu sometime in the early 1590's. From that period until the French conquest, the Mossi remained relatively quiescent. They developed and maintained [105 an economy based on grain cultivation, livestock rearing, cotton pro- 631] duction, and trade between the forest zones and the desert. Their political system crystallized into a loose confederacy of fairly autonomous kingdoms and principalities, sometimes tribute to the Moro Naba, the ruler of Wagadougou.

Wagadougou, the most important Mossi political entity, was like 631 the lesser kingdoms, pyramidal in political structure. At the top was 643 and still is the Moro Naba, a lineal descendant of Wedraogo, the Dagomba conquerer who founded the Mossi group and Moro Naba Wubri, the first ruler of the Wagadougou dynasty. Paying allegiance [635] to him, were the princes who ruled such autonomous provinces as Yako, Boulsa, Mane, Riziam, and Boussouma. These princes were all sons or near relatives of the early Moro Nabas. Directly under the Moro [634] Naba were district chiefs who were descended from the cadet branches of the ruling family. The villages within the district were in turn ruled [632] by the chiefs of the indigenous populations. In many of the villages, [566]

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643 the sons of the ruling family, the *nakomces*, formed a noble class, above
565 classes of commoners, serfs, and slaves. Classed among the commoners
in many villages were the descendants of former district chiefs
who had been deposed by the Moro Nabas. The reason that the rulers
gave for the deposal of district chiefs was always disloyalty; but everyone
recognized that this was an excuse whereby the reigning sublineage
deposed older branches and provided positions for its cadet or collateral
branches.

631 The governing hierarchy of the Mossi was a lineage with its component
613 minor and minimal branches. Like most lineages, this ruling
lineage possessed an ideology that all of its members had equal access
to its corporate assets. The most important asset of this lineage was,
of course, its sovereignty, its right to rule. The *nam* is the symbol of
Mossi sovereignty and is described by them as "that force of God which
enables a mere man to rule over other men." The *nam* was the possession
of Wedraogo, the group's founder, and of Moro Naba Wubri,
the first ruler of Wagadougou, and this possession became the patrimony
of all their descendants. This being the case, the ruling chief
of any village, district, principality, or kingdom did not own the *nam*
of that area; he was considered the temporary holder of it, and on his
death it reverted to the collective descendants of the royal ancestors.
[428 A man did not have the right to pass the *nam* on to any person because
424] it was not his. Whenever a Mossi chief was being considered for office
his commoner electors asked him the following questions: "Before
his death, did Naba X designate anyone to replace him as chief?"
This question was asked three times, and the candidate responded
three times: "No! The Naba did not designate anyone. You may
name anyone you wish; even if he is a blind man or a leper."

In actuality, this vaunted equality of access to the *nam* by all members of the ruling lineage was a legal fiction. And despite the fact that all the nobles declared that they could go to Wagadougou to seek the *nam* whenever a chief died, in reality only the members of the dead chief's minimal lineage (often the descendants of his grandfather) presented themselves as candidates. Indeed, of all the candidates, the eldest son of the dead ruler was the one most often chosen to be

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696 all the chaos would come a new appreciation for the task of the chief, and a cessation of the grumbling that the chiefs were greedy.

662 The Mossi interregnum also served another purpose. It gave the
428 electors the opportunity to exhaust and redistribute much of the patri-
666 mony of the dead ruler, which was brought to them by his heirs who were trying to obtain the chieftainship through bribery. Sometimes, a candidate's ability to collect a great deal of goods with which to press his suit often revealed to the electors the strength of his following in the district or village, for had he been an unpopular man he would have had to use only his own resources.

666 The Mossi electors were always concerned with the health and
643 character of a potential chief, and turned down the most promising
175 candidates who were deficient in any of these qualities. For example, when Moro Naba Sanum died in 1890 without leaving a male heir, his younger brother, Bokary Koutou, was the strongest candidate for the *nam*. Yet he was passed over, at first, by the electors because of his reputation as a bandit and a rebel. We know from Captain Binger, a Frenchman who met Bokary in 1888, that this prince was indeed a bandit and a slave raider. But Binger, although deploring Bokary's conduct, exonerated him on the grounds that the Moro Naba had sent him into exile without any means of support. This was true, but the
[687] reason that Moro Naba Sanum did so was because Bokary had raised a rebellion against him as an attempt to obtain their father's position. Bokary was forbidden to appear in the capital; but when he heard that his brother Sanum was dead, he took a force of soldiers and hurried to Wagadougou fearing that an attempt would have been made to prevent his election. When he found that his fears were justified, he became
[669] desperate and secreted a force of Gurunsi warriors around the elector's meeting place, threatening to kill them if he was not named Moro Naba. They succumbed to his threat and he received the *nam*. During
643 the customary speech in which a new ruler chose his official name,
175 announced his program for the people and the country, or ridiculed his erstwhile competitors, Bokary Koutou said: "A hundred ghosts cannot frighten an elephant (Wobogo)," meaning that he was not afraid
648 of any of his enemies. He thereafter became known as Moro Naba
721 Wobogo, and he chose to live up to his boast when the French arrived
175 and asked him to sign a treaty of protection with them. He refused

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and chose to fight, and when defeated, fled to the Gold Coast 648
(Ghana). From here he intrigued with the British against the French 721
and even succeeded in having his brother poisoned for accepting the
title of Moro Naba. It was only when the British accepted French 636
sovereignty over Mossi country that Bokary accepted his deposition 175
and permanent exile.

Once the traditional electors had chosen one of Bokary's younger 636
relatives, Siguiri as Moro Naba, the Mossi people themselves quietly 643
accepted French rule. Their behavior was in this respect similar to 175
that of many indigenous populations with complex political institutions who had been conquered by the Europeans. In contrast, the neighboring Dogon, Gurunsi, and Lobi, whose political systems were very simple, and who had been constantly raided by the Mossi for slaves, kept on rebelling against French rule, and in some cases shot poisoned arrows at French tax collectors and labor recruiters as late as 1941. The only opposition which they offered the French was in 1910 when an attempt was made to reorganize the Mossi districts for administrative reasons. However, when the French changed their policy of direct administration to a form of indirect rule, the Mossi remained so peaceful that
by 1922 there was only one administrator for every 60,000 inhabitants. 648

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Moro Naba Kom who reigned from 1905 to 1942 skillfully pre- 175
served the power of the ruling dynasty during a period when the Mossi 662
people were subjected to a rather severe forced labor regime. This was also a period during which the administration deposed chiefs who ran afoul of its wishes or policies. The political ability of this ruler is best exemplified by the order of succession that occurred in the Doulougou district. In 1895 Moro Naba Wobogo had appointed his own son as Doulougou chief in place of Koabga Wedraogo whom he had deposed and killed. However, when Wobogo fled from the French the next year, his son, the Doulougou chief, killed himself because he did not wish to follow his father into exile. The new Moro Naba Siguiri placed a son of the former district chief, Koabga Wodraogo, as chief of Doulougou. This chief died in 1906 and was replaced by a brother. Unfortunately this chief ran afoul of the French, was deposed and placed in "obligatory residence" in another district where he died in 1927. The Moro Naba then elected another son of ex-

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636 Moro Naba Wobogo as chief of Doulougou, but this chief was assassinated.
175 Thereafter the Moro Naba placed his own brother as chief of Doulougou district only to have him deposed by the French in 1932
662 for abusing his power. Now the Moro Naba again turned to a descendant of Koabga Wedrago and named him chief, but the French also deposed and jailed this chief for incapacity. Finally in 1935, the Moro Naba named his own son, Etienne Kongo, as chief, and this man was still chief when I left the Mossi in 1957. The interesting feature of this succession is that the Moro Naba confined it to three specific families: his own, that of ex-Moro Naba Wobogo, and that of the ancient chiefly line of Doulougou. In no case did Moro Naba Kom attempt to elevate to chieftainship the son or relative of a man whom the French deposed. He named a chief from another one of the chiefly families, and when a member of this line was deposed, he quickly turned to another one. In this way, the Moro Naba never gave the French any cause for thinking that he disapproved of their action by placing as chief a relative of the man they had deposed. This type of succession was only possible because of the flexibility in the Mossi mode of chiefly succession. Furthermore, the district people readily accepted the chiefs appointed by the Moro Naba because he never deviated from their cultural expectations, or violated the accepted norm of succession.

636 A more serious attempt on the part of the French to influence the
643 traditional political organization of the Mossi came when they tried to enroll the sons of the Moro Naba and those of other chiefs in a special school in order to make these boys adjuncts in their administration. The eldest sons of the Moro Naba and of the officials around Wagadougou were all sent to school because they were well known to the French.
636 However, in the rural districts, the chiefs hesitated to send their eldest
643 sons to school. First of all, they regarded this plan as another form of
186 forced labor from which their sons might never return. And secondly,
662 because they also feared that if these youths did return as educated men, they would have been Christianized, and thereby would have been unable or unwilling to perform the important roles which chiefs had vis-a-vis the ancestors. To palliate the French the chiefs sent their youngest or motherless sons to schools, or in some cases substituted the sons

of their former serfs and slaves who were theoretically also "their sons." 636

The sons of the chiefs and those boys of commoner, serf, and slave 643
origins who had gone to the mission schools became the first group 186
of educated Mossi. The educated commoners had no function in the 662
traditional political system and were readily absorbed by the local
French bureaucracy. However, since these persons were not sufficient
to fill the administration's need of literate Mossi, the sons of chiefs and
even the carefully coached missionary catechists were encouraged to
join the civil service. The result of this policy was that almost no
literate Mossi were elected to district and village chieftainship before
the end of the second world war.

The relatively rapid political development which came to French 636
Africa as a result of the Brazzaville Conference of 1944 and the after- 646
math of the war presented the traditional Mossi political hierarchy with
a grave problem: "Who should represent the Mossi people in the new
French assemblies and councils both in Africa and in metropolitan
France?" There were three possibilities: They could be represented
by educated foreign Africans; by the educated sons of Mossi chiefs
whose loyalties were not known; or by the potentially hostile educated
Mossi commoners. The first hint of the Moro Naba's policy was re- 636
vealed when the Africans were called upon to select delegates to send 646
to the French Constituent Assembly on October 21, 1945. Houphouet 666
[Boigny], who anticipated the determination of the Mossi to support 662
their own candidate, had vainly taken the precaution of sending an emis-
sary to the Moro Naba prior to the September 8 meeting [which the
Africans had called to plan strategy]. The Moro Naba proved un-
amenable to the suggestion that he support Houphouet's candidacy, and
insisted on backing one of his own loyals vassals, Tenga Wedraogo or
Baloum Naba.[6] This action showed clearly that the Mossi had plan-
ned to use educated chiefs who could also represent them in the as-
semblies. The flexible pattern of Mossi political succession enabled
the Moro Naba and his advisers to meet this new contingency. In
three districts, Manga, Sapone, and Kaya, the eldest sons of deceased
chiefs were passed over, and their younger educated brothers were
elected to the vacant chieftainships. There were some hard feelings
over the appointment of Sapone, but the reason given was that the new
chief was partially blind in one eye. I have no data for the reaction of

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646 the Kaya people to their new chief. However, in Manga the proposed
666 election of a young chief over his four elder brothers did cause some
662 concern and talk about Catholic machinations because the nominee was of that faith. But there was no overt opposition to him once he had been elected. His elder brother accepted the wishes of the Moro Naba with good graces even though he remains a rather tragic individual.

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636 The differential treatment that the Manga Naba receives from the administration is obvious to everyone. Whereas the other district chiefs are still summarily summoned to the administrative center, and kept waiting, the Manga Naba sends his assistants to represent him. When the Governor of the Haute Volta came to Manga to make it an administrative subdivision, he was entertained by the Manga Naba while the neighboring district chiefs celebrated outside. It was the political power of this educated chief which was responsible for Manga becoming an administrative subdivision even though it is located several miles from the highway which runs between Wagadougou and Ghana. Furthermore, the population of the neighboring district all complain that Manga's population has gained a disproportionate share of all the services provided by the governmental agencies whose headquarters are there. The fears which the Manga people and the other Mossi have had over their chiefs being Catholic have not materialized in Manga. Of course, the Manga Naba does perform the rituals on the
[769] day of the ancestral feasts. These rites are now being performed by his father's brother who has become the ritual head of the ruling lineage (and it is possible that this line may become the line which performs this task for the now "secular" chief). However, when the
[777] chief celebrates the anniversary of his conversion to Catholicism at the mission, afterwards he holds court in his house where he receives from Catholics, Moslems, and pagans alike, the gifts he normally would have received in the feast of the ancestors.[6]

The most important function of such Mossi chiefs as the Manga Naba is to defend the interests of the Mossi people in the territorial assemblies and the French councils and assemblies while preserving the ruling tradition of the descendants of Wedraogo and Wubri. In his capacity as politician-chief, the Manga Naba joined a fellow Mossi of rather humble origin in sponsoring several bills in the Assembly of

the French Union including one to build up the capital of Wagadougou. 643
At home he has taken an active interest in interdistrict politics, and has 636
acted as a liaison between his fellow traditional chiefs and the Mossi politicians of commoner origins. It goes without saying that he only supports those persons who are not opposed to the Moro Naba. As a matter of course, leading Mossi politicians fearing rebuffs from the district chiefs seldom visit any of the districts in the Manga subdivision unless they are accompanied and introduced by the Manga Naba. This kind of co-operation is what made it reasonable for a united block of political parties in Upper Volta, the Unified Democratic Party (Parti Democratique Unifie) to elect the late Moro Naba Sagha as it's honorary president before his death in 1956. At that time, the new party stressed the point that its action was guided by the fact that only the Mossi people had preserved their political identity throughout African history.[7]

The power of the traditional Mossi chiefs has been ably defended by their new politician-chiefs against those Africans who would relegate the institution of the chieftainship to ethnological musuems. The Manga Naba speaking before the Congress of Traditional Chiefs in Dakar in 1956 declared:

> Without wishing to direct any reproach to those who are demanding the abolition of traditional chieftainships, and who severely criticize institutions of whose value they are totally unaware, we ask them to beware of blaming the desert for the grain of sand which falls into the eye. We ask them not to compare the chieftainship instituted among them only a few years ago, chieftainship which perhaps has been imposed upon them, to ours which has existed for centuries.
>
> It is not our fault, if the manufactured chiefs among them have not known how to perform their tasks and have believed that to administer they had to resort to all sorts of extortions. One has never placed at the head of our villages, districts, provinces, or kingdoms persons who have come from elsewhere (former boys, stewards, cooks, or interpreters), because it could not be done. If in our country there are chiefs who are former civil servants [like the speaker, I must add] it is that they are persons who have inherited these positions according to custom, and in the places of their fathers, uncles, or brothers.

> 643 636 We Mossi cannot say that the Europeans have introduced chieftainship among us; for we are old hands at it. Chieftainship has always existed among us, and we intend to conserve it in spite of anything one may say about it.
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> Who better than we chiefs can hope for a rapid evolution of our country? However, because of the pride we have [185] in the organized society that we have known well before French occupation, we wish this evolution to take place within our specific cultural pattern, to harmonize with, and to take into consideration the wisdom which has permitted us to conserve the integrity of our homeland until French occupation.
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> Without wishing to place ourselves against the demands of those who are wedded to an overthrow of local traditions, we endeavor to state our position clearly: Let everyone scratch whatever itches him.[8]

643 178 It is too early to predict what will be the fate of the traditional Mossi chiefs. The factors which made for such weaknesses in their political system—hazardous interregnums and flexibility in succession—have certainly ceased to operate. But, as I have shown, by a curious coincidence, a form of succession which evolved to meet a particular set of circumstances served the Mossi in good stead during French occupation, and is now being adapted to serve the needs of a new political environment. This flexibility in succession may even provide the Mossi with a wide enough choice of candidates to preserve the traditional ruling lineages in the face of a changing political system. Furthermore, this flexibility in political succession appears to be more compatible and less in conflict with the principles of universal suffrage which have been introduced in this society to serve the needs of the developing parliamentary system.

The growing use of Mossi traditional chiefs as modern politicians has not precluded the opportunity of Mossi commoners to take part in the governmental organization of the territory in which their group resides. As a matter of fact, there are a number of commoners who [556] are well educated, and individually have held high administrative offices. However, despite a number of them who have been critical of the traditional ruling hierarchy, they have not succeeded in breaking the strong hold of the traditional ruling lineage on the people. Some commoners have even found it to their advantage to ally themselves

with the Moro Naba and his chiefs. The Mossi commoner who be- 643
came Minister of the Interior in the Mendes-France government re- 178
ceived the treatment fitting to his rank from French officials in Africa, but he bowed humbly and paid homage to the Moro Naba when he visited Wagadougou. In return he still receives political support from the traditional Mossi hierarchy. Whether or not this man and the other Mossi politicians of commoner origin will continue to honor and respect the chiefs in order to obtain their support is not known. It is possible that this situation will change if the growing number of urban Mossi and some of their rural fellows attack the position of the chiefs. But for the foreseeable future it appears as though the traditional dynasty will remain in power, and may even extend its power at the expense of the other non-Mossi groups who are now members of the Voltaic Republic.

The apparent success of the ancient political dynasty of the Mossi 177
people to adapt itself to the requirements of the modern world shows 64
the ability of African institutions to adjust novelty with tradition. It confirms what the anthropologists have always known, that Africa was not a *tabla rasa* on which conquerors could easily impose their ideas and institutions. The cultures of Africa were meaningful to its peoples and when they could not be maintained, they were reinterpreted to meet new situations.[9] It is quite true that because of historical reasons the Mossi did not come into as intensive contact with Europeans as did their neighbors to the south, and that this is possibly why their institutions have persisted. However, the experience of Ghana should make us pause before accepting such a facile answer. A British type of Parliamentary system was imposed upon that country, but it is changing so rapidly that one wonders whether it should have been imposed in the first place. It is still too early to tell what the Ghanaian and other modern African governments will look like; but one might speculate that within the bounds set by the exigencies of the modern world, these governments may resemble the traditional African ones much more than those of their ephemeral conquerors.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. According to C. K. Meek, among the Jukun "The King's demise was and is kept 113
a close secret, and is not, in fact revealed until some months afterwards, when the 114
body is formally buried. Various reasons are assigned for this secrecy, such as that

642 613 173 778 had done so with full permission of his father and in place of an unadventurous elder brother.

635 642 613 173 778 For example, the ruling family of the Boulsa province claimed that its ancestor, Naba Namende, was the eldest son of Mogho Naba Oubri and chose to become his father's *Kourita* (a young son of a deceased Mogho Naba chosen as his father's personal representative on earth) and go into exile rather than subject his younger brother to the ordeal. At the same time, Namende sought to retain royal power equal to that of his brother, the new Mogho Naba, by taking Oubri's royal amulets with him.[3]

635 642 613 631 Mane province, too, was founded by one Nyaseme, a son of Koudoumie, who felt that he should have been given the nam. When routed in battle by his elder brother Kouda, he moved into the region of Mane, where he defeated the indigenous Ninisi and ruled over them. The princes who broke away from Ouagadougou during Koudoumie's reign considered themselves theoretically equal to the supreme ruler. Thus, they took the title of Dim. By so doing, they dramatized their claim to equality of status, if not of power, with the Mogho Naba, and their determination to "submit only to God."[4]

642 643 613 631 [593 The Mossi insist that the relationship between the Mogho Naba and the Dimdamba was similar to that between father and sons, since the Dimdamba were "really the sons of the Mogho Naba" and are said to have acted as such. This analogy is interesting in view of the Mossi traditional pattern of avoidance—combined with love and tolerance—between fathers and elder sons.[5] The Dimdamba were often allowed to act at variance with the Mogho Naba. Some of them shifted allegiance from kingdom to kingdom; others usurped the power of the Mogho Naba over smaller districts, or claimed that they had been given this power; and most of them regulated their own affairs with little interference from their sovereign. He, as "father," interfered on occasion in their internal affairs, demanding help from them and often chastising them if they failed to comply.

634 631 613 642 The Mogho Naba and the Dimdamba often appointed their younger sons or brothers as rulers (Kombemba) of the districts that made up their kingdoms and principalities. In this way, power and authority were kept within the royal clan and its lineages. Nevertheless, in keeping with the concept of corporate access to the nam, the rulers of these dependencies had traditions that served to reconcile their claims to kingly or princely status with their actual subordinate position. District founders, too, were often portrayed as eldest sons who had been cheated out of their patrimony or had voluntarily left it to establish new districts. In some cases, the legendary heroes were granted miraculous births as well.

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[428] power and authority were inherited by their families in the same manner as among Mossi lineages.

634 The last important category of Mossi chiefs included men who ruled
over slave and serf villages. These men were themselves the descendants
622 of slaves and serfs, for no free-born Mossi were placed in such posts. Needless to say, these chiefs were never lineally or collaterally related to the
[602] district chiefs, and therefore were never nobles. However, they might be
affinally related to district chiefs, and in such cases the relationship was
often of some political value.

It must be emphasized that once a man was made chief, he was respected, if not honored, by all the people of the district. In some districts,
the Dapore Naba and the Baglere Naba, chiefs of two categories of serfs,
were among the most valued assistants of the Kombere Naba. The only
[565] people who sometimes refused to honor the village chiefs were the nakomce,
[778] who were the holders of the district nam. Nevertheless, they were censored by the Kombere if they were disrespectful to his subordinates. No district chief could allow his government to be jeopardized by the maltreatment of persons who served it. In any conflict between the nam and the kin group, the supremacy of the nam was always maintained.

613 Every Mossi ruler, whether he held the nam of a kingdom, principality,
631 district, or village, was *ipso facto* also *Boodkasma* (literally, "family head")
622 of the local segment of his boodoo. The word boodoo refers to patrilineal
groups that anthropologists would normally call clans, maximal lineages,
major lineages, or minor lineages. The Mossi do not make any terminological distinction between these levels of their segmentary lineage system.
Nevertheless, they recognize and use the status differences between these
units to limit the access of each unit to the corporate assets of the boodoo.
Their major social distinction is drawn between the minor lineage, which
is also called boodoo, and its component minimal lineages. Each minimal-
[596] lineage unit is called a *babissi* (literally, "father's brother"), and is really a
large extended family composed of relatives who had a common ancestor,
three, four, or at most five generations ago.

● 643 The Mogho Naba, for example, was head of his babissi as well as ex
613 officio head of the entire royal clan. Those rulers who claimed equality
with him claimed that they, not he, were the true heads of the royal clan
and the "direct" descendants of Ouedraogo and Oubri. As a function of
their political position, the many princes and district chiefs were heads of
their own babissi and of the maximal lineage to which their babissi be-
631 longed. Like the Mogho Naba, they were the ex officio heads of all members
613 of their boodoo who lived in their territory and who claimed descent from
the same royal ancestors,

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613 778 also lost much of their interest in preserving their genealogies. Their local lineage segment, which controlled the village nam, still showed interest in its genealogy, but the people of Godin did not quite remember how they were related to the ruling lineage segment. Several times in the recent history of Barkago (and other villages), the men who were given the village nam had to be recalled from distant villages where they were living with maternal patrilineages. So relatively unimportant was possession of the village nam without concomitant noble status that after Naba Ngado took over, the local Biligo people began to ignore all local genealogical records except descent from Biligo. The Ninisi people had the least reason to be interested in their genealogy, and they simply ignored it. They had been separated from the other Ninisi groups in the district for so long that they did not even forbid marriage into those groups.

613 621 In villages such as Barkago, the existence of several lineage groupings and families of strangers facilitated local marriages. But in villages with fewer lineage groups, the time came when all groups were so closely linked by marriage and affinal alliances that for all practical purposes the village became an exogamous unit. By 1956, this process had reached such an advanced stage in Barkago that hardly any marriages took place between the Ninisi and Biligo local lineage segments. Both groups were permitted to marry the local descendants of Ngado, because the latter were more recent arrivals in the village. These marriages were of great significance to all villagers because they linked the nobles and the commoners in a series of exchanges. Moreover, because the groups were linked through sisters' sons [565] with special privileges in both groups, problems deriving from status differences [606] were more easily solved. Even the most arrogant noble was often [607] constrained by ancestral sanctions to maintain amicable relations with his in-laws.

The Biligo lineage of Barkago contracted marriages with the other, nonrelated groups within and without the district. The Ngado people did likewise. Whether these nobles were able to marry noble women of other districts is a moot point. Owing to distance and politics, no such marriages are known to have occurred, and no one seems to know whether they were permissible. The Ninisi, who had always been commoners, had the largest marriage circle of all the village groups. They were able to marry nobles, commoners, and the Ninisi of the district and other districts.

423 613 The inhabitants of a Mossi village built their houses and cultivated their crops on land the village chief had granted to their respective lineages. Since the royal lineage, by right of conquest, controlled all of Mossi country, the rights of usufruct of a lineage depended ultimately on the Mogho [643]

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Naba. This did not mean, however, that either the Mogho Naba or any of his chiefs owned the land of Mossi country. The Mossi chiefs and their ruling lineage controlled the Mossi people and thus were able to decide who should use the land. However, there is no evidence that Mossi chiefs ever thought of controlling people by controlling land. The land appears to have been a public good, the utilization of which was in the rulers' interests. Rulers tried to attract more people, but they hardly ever tried to get more land. The people within a Mossi community who might have been said to "own" the land were the Ninisi, whose rights were derived from first occupancy and from their special association with the soil in which their ancestors were buried. When they were conquered, they did not lose their "ritual" rights over the land of their communities, but they were persuaded or forced to "care for" them in the name of the ruling group.

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
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III

KINGSHIP AND CHIEFSHIP

MOSSI TRADITIONAL government revolved around the Nanamse, as all Mossi rulers were called. Sometimes the title was also given on an honorific basis to commoners, serfs, or slaves who performed specific duties for a Mogho Naba or a district chief; but the only true Nanamse were persons who traced their descent from Ouedraogo and Oubri. 642

The heads of the four Mossi kingdoms—the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou, the Yatenga Naba, the Tenkodogo Naba, and the Fada-N'Gourma Naba—were supreme in their own realms, but there was considerable rivalry among them throughout Mossi history.[1] In terms of closeness of descent from the nation's founders, the Tenkodogo Naba came first, the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou second, and the Yatenga Naba third. The Naba of Fada-N'Gourma was outside the hierarchy. As time passed, the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou gradually became more powerful than the other rulers, even though he recognized the seniority of Tenkodogo and, as we shall see, had difficulty exercising his seniority and supremacy over the Yatenga. Because he was the pre-eminent Mossi ruler, the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou set the general pattern of kingship and chiefship. The heads of the other kingdoms, principalities, districts, and villages tried to approximate the pomp and ceremony of the Ouagadougou court as closely as their resources and etiquette permitted. The pattern of chiefship among the Mossi in general thus differed little from that of the Ouagadougou kingdom. 642 643

The Mossi of Ouagadougou believed that their Mogho Naba was superior to all other kings. They believed that his realm was the largest in the world, and that no other king was so rich and powerful. He was so awe-inspiring, so "like the sun," that no one dared to look upon his face. It was forbidden to touch his hand, or speak to him from any but a kneeling position with the forehead touching the ground. People were expected to hesitate before pronouncing his name, and no other person was allowed to bear 643 [516] [576]

643 the name of the current ruler. When Crozat asked one of his Mossi bearers
why Boukary Koutou had chosen a title that means "elephant," the man
declared, "He is an elephant; he is king of all kings as the elephant is king
of all animals; a great elephant-king he is."[2] Another Moaga, meeting
Crozat on the road to Ouagadougou, told him to be prepared to meet a
monarch "whose riches are inexhaustible and whose splendor is marvelous.
[644] He and his family wear only the most admirable European clothes; a thousand
horses stand before his door, and there are more than a thousand
women in his house. He is served by one hundred eunuchs; he commands
as master 333 chiefs; and when he speaks to them it is as though God himself
had spoken; everyone bows down before him and obeys."[3] Crozat,
looking at the Mogho Naba through European eyes, did not find the "great
[576] king" he had expected. Yet he and later European visitors to the Mossi
[516] capital did affirm that all Mossi officials and district chiefs prostrated themselves
in obeisance to their sovereign, even if they did not subsequently
follow his instructions.[4]

643 Many rituals associated with the person and court of the Mogho Naba
796 served to emphasize the high esteem in which he was held by his subjects.
For example, the sovereign showed himself every morning at a ceremony
called "Ouend pous yan" (literally, "God rises," or "the sun rises") that
survives to this day. The name of this ceremony has led many scholars
[114] and travelers to assert that traditionally the Mogho Naba was considered
a divine king. Dim Delobson states that this ceremony "shows the regard
which the Mossi have for their chief, since they compare him to the sun,
and thus to a 'god.'"[5] However, the Mossi do not now and probably never
did regard their monarchs either as gods or as divine kings. There is a
great deal of difference between regarding a man as "powerful and brilliant"
like the sun and regarding him as divine. As a matter of fact, the
[522] Mossi very often dramatize in humorous fashion the all-too-human frailties
of their rulers, without ever considering it sacrilegious to do so. On the
other hand, the Mogho Naba, as the supreme ruler, was expected to follow
faithfully the strict etiquette demanded by his exalted position.

643 The morning ceremony was opened by the ruler's chief page, the *so-*
796 *ghone-kasanga,* who sprinkled a phylacteric solution around a throne
644 (*guere*) in the courtyard in front of a reception room called the *zongo.*
Other pages (*soghondamba*) brought out a large cushion (*naghpure*), the
ruler's sword, and other personal accouterments, and placed them on the
[292] throne. Still other pages aided the Mogho Naba in his toilet. He was
clothed in a large red robe, which symbolized the rising sun; he wore a
bonnet surmounted by silver streamers (*wazourfou sebere*), which repre-
-sented the sun itself.

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sented the sun itself. The toilet was performed in complete silence, for no 644
one was allowed to speak to the monarch until after the ceremony. Meanwhile, 796
in the courtyard, the court dignitaries, visitors, and the musicians and minstrels (*bendere*) took their places. The provincial ministers sat on their [645]
respective stones (*coganaramse*), and the visitors sat by their hosts. The pages at the door of the zongo awaited the moment when the Mogho Naba and his escort would emerge from the zongo. On seeing the two pages who preceded the monarch, they snapped their fingers as a signal to the still silent bendere.

On seeing the monarch, the chief musician, the Bendere Naba, rubbed [533]
his fingers across the top of his drum to produce the sound of a lion's growl, and the other drummers and violinists played the royal air, "Ouend pous yan." The head guard, the Kambo Naba, and his men, carrying guns, walked up from the side and knelt down facing the assembly. And the *samande-kamba*, the "servants of the courtyard," came with heavy batons to guard against crimes of lese majesty. From the wings came a groom with a partly saddled ceremonial horse. As soon as the monarch was seated on his throne, his two pages moved to the front and knelt down facing the 643
courtyard. The salutations now began. The first group of ministers, led 645
by the Baloum Naba and including the Samande Naba, the Samande Nabila, 796
the Ouedrange Naba, the Kamsaogho Naba, and the Zusoaba Kasanga, 576
left their stones and came to the throne with slow steps and bowed heads. A few yards from the monarch, they knelt on the ground, and with their fingers folded and their thumbs in the air, leaned forward, struck the ground with both hands three times, and then rubbed the palms of their left hands with the fingers of their right. Then they arose, and with heads still bowed walked backwards to their places.[6] With the music still playing, another group of ministers, led by the Ouidi Naba and including such men as the Gounga Naba, the Larhalle Naba, and the Pwe Naba, saluted the ruler in the same manner. On Fridays and other Islamic holy days, the [792]
Moslem Imam representing the Ouagadougou congregation read aloud from the Koran. This part of the ceremony ended when the Mogho Naba [481]
rose, and, with the measured steps and swaying gait that signified royalty, retired to the zongo, preceded by his two pages.[7]

A few minutes later, the monarch returned to the courtyard without his red robe and glittering headdress. There was a second round of salutations comparable to the first, but this time the Ouidi Naba and his group did not appear unless it was an important occasion or important guests were present. When this part of the ceremony was over, the monarch 643
called for his half-saddled horse and announced that he wished to go to 796

643 796 La, a village near Koudougou district. His eldest wife, the *Pughtiema,* appeared carrying her household utensils in order to accompany her husband. However, all the ministers, led by the Kamsaogho Naba, implored the monarch to have his horse unsaddled and to postpone the trip until the following day. Feigning anger, the Mogho Naba reluctantly agreed to remain in the capital, ordered his horse unsaddled, dismissed his wife, and re-entered the palace.*

173 643 796 The tradition about the origin of this ritual reveals something of the Mossi attitude toward the human frailties of their rulers. It appears that Poko, the favorite wife of Mogho Naba Waraga (ca. 1660–80), asked permission to visit her father at La, and that he refused to grant her request because of his love and admiration for her. Nevertheless, she continued to ask him for permission, and after her third request he granted her wish and sent a page and a small girl with her as chaperons. When Poko did not return to the palace on the third day, Naba Waraga sent two pages to her father's compound to fetch her, and here they discovered that she had died. Fearing the king's wrath toward persons who brought bad tidings, the pages did not report back to him but notified the ministers of Poko's death. When subsequent messengers also failed to return, the king decided to go to La. The following day, after the morning ceremonies, he ordered his horse saddled and commanded the Pughtiema to get ready to accompany him on his journey. But the ministers, anxious to protect him from grief, told him that a great king never followed a mere woman under any circumstances and persuaded him not to depart. The monarch went back into the palace, and the dignitaries ordered the horse unsaddled and sent it away. Shortly afterwards, the king changed his mind and decided to go to La, but he was beseeched not to do so. He swore that he would leave the following morning, and that if he were prevented from doing so, he would advise all his descendants to try to go to La every morning until one of them succeeded.*

643 644 692 576 [431] At the end of this ceremony, a page gave the ministers an ample supply of beer and kola nuts. The Moslems were given presents of kola nuts and millet water (*zom kom*) sweetened with honey, since they were forbidden to drink millet beer. Later in the morning, the Mogho Naba left the palace and entered the zongo, where he greeted his visitors, accepted gifts from visiting chiefs and subjects, dispensed gifts in turn, and presided over the court of justice. Anyone who went to see the ruler had to be accompanied by his provincial minister or his host—regardless of whether it was his purpose to pay a courtesy visit, to pledge allegiance, to plead for aid, or to give 643 644 576 testimony in a lawsuit. Pages moved back and forth between the palace and the courtyard, dispensing kola nuts and beer or millet water prepared

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by the sovereign's wives. Other pages waited upon the monarch, and accompanied 644
him when he moved about the courtyard. When the ruler 576
drank any liquid, the pages rubbed the palm of one hand with the fingers of the other; when he sneezed, everyone clapped; and when he stepped out to urinate, a page accompanied him, turned his back to him, knelt down, and saluted by rubbing his palm.

When the Mogho Naba had finished his morning audiences, he entered 643
his palace for a solitary meal. This meal was prepared by one of his young 264
wives, who tasted it in his presence before giving it to the page who served
him.[10] After eating, the monarch rested for a few hours; then he emerged [692]
into the courtyard to grant audiences and hear court cases until sunset. At that time he retired to his palace, and those courtiers who were not connected with the evening ceremonies returned to their homes.

The ceremony that closed the day at the monarch's court was called 644
"Kwaga Basgha" (literally, "final meal"). This ceremony still survives. 796
As soon as the sun began to set, the samande-kamba took their heavy 645
batons and stood guard to prevent unauthorized persons from coming near the *namtibo* (royal amulets). The Baloum Naba and the Bendere Naba entered the palace courtyard and knelt before the zongo. The chief page then brought out the *kwaga,* a pottery vessel containing a fire ritually associated with the namtibo.[11] The vessel was placed on the ground, and the page blew on the fire to make it burn brightly. Meanwhile, the Bendere Naba rubbed his fingers across his drum to make the growl of a lion. When the fire finally died out, the Zusoaba Kasanga and the Baloum Naba closed the ceremony by rising, coming together, and saluting the namtibo in the traditional Mossi manner. (The Mogho Naba did not attend this ceremony.) Before the officials left for the night, the pages gave them pots of beer prepared by the royal wives. Sometimes these officials visited the Mogho
Naba before they retired to their compounds. Once these men had departed, [264]
the pages served the ruler his evening meal, which again had been [643]
prepared by one of his young wives.

During the hours of darkness the Mogho Naba conducted many secret 643
affairs of state and conversed with the members of his household. Persons 644
seeking the nam of a deceased relative were often granted audience at night, [692]
as were litigants in court cases. When there were no pressing matters of state, the ruler gathered some of the royal wives around him and discussed family affairs, which protocol forbade him to discuss during the day. Some rulers reportedly disguised themselves and visited the wards of the town in the company of a young man from the palace, in an effort to learn things that did not ordinarily come to a ruler's attention.

The Mogho Naba slept in a grass hut in the palace compound. Two

513 The Mogho Naba slept in a grass hut in the palace compound. Two
643 reasons are given for the choice of a grass hut over a brick building: first,
[342] the grass hut was considered better protection against sorcerers, who were
[754] believed to induce storms that destroy buildings and their occupants; second, it was believed that the ruler's ancestors preferred to visit grass huts
[775] because it was easier for them to enter through the interstices in the walls.
[644] When the monarch retired for the night, one of his pages stood guard at the door. The Mogho Naba usually slept all night, but he occasionally made the rounds with a page to check on the palace guards or the safety (and virtue) of his wives.

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[644] The routine of the Mogho Naba seldom varied. Only in times of danger or on great ceremonial occasions did protocol permit any major changes in court procedure. Normally, pages, ministers, and other court officials adhered very strictly to their traditional tasks.

The Mossi considered the king's office to be such a difficult one that even today they say, *Mogho Naba toumde ya yida fa* ("The Mogho Naba's task is the most difficult of all"). Nevertheless, the Mogho Naba's office was always eagerly sought, and considerable care had to be exercised to
[645] ensure that the right person was chosen. As soon as the incumbent Mogho Naba died, and even before he was buried, the Ouidi Naba, as prime minister, began the consultations leading to the selection of a new monarch. Mossi custom decreed that the eldest son of a previous ruler be chosen as the new Mogho Naba. This choice was not automatic, however, in view of the primary consideration that the person selected should have the skill to "keep" the country. Other qualifications for office were membership in the royal minimal lineage, soundness of body and mind, and sufficient age to command universal respect. Given these requirements and the lack of any provisions for a regency, it is not surprising that a dead ruler's sons, brothers, uncles, and even grandchildren—that is, his entire babissi—should have competed to "eat the nam" (accede to power).[15] Of the thirty-four kings who have ruled since Oubri, the founder of the Ouagadougou dynasty, twelve succeeded their brothers and twenty-two their fathers. Interestingly enough, there is some indication that at the beginning of the Ouagadougou dynasty, the successor of a king was usually chosen from among his brothers before the nam was passed on to the next generation.[16] For example, Oubri's four sons all reigned in turn before the kingship descended to the son of the last brother in office. Then, two of this brother's sons reigned before the nam descended to a new generation. Initially, then, seniority within the royal lineage, like seniority within the local ruling lineages, may have been determined by generation. On the other hand, accidental factors may have governed: a weak state organization may have

required mature rulers, or an uncle may have vanquished a nephew by 643 physical prowess or force of character.

The pretenders to the Mossi nam began to press their claims as soon as 643 propriety allowed. They presented gifts to the Ouidi Naba and to the other 645 ministers in an attempt to sway the issue. The Ouidi Naba finally called a secret council composed of the Gounga Naba, the Larhalle Naba, the Kamsaogho Naba, and the Tansoba, and recited to them the following formula: "The country does not have a chief, and it needs one. Among all the people who wish to be elected [*di nam*, "eat the nam"], it is for you to choose the most worthy."[14] To this the councillors responded: "Naba! You are our superior, and the right to make the choice rests upon you alone." Thus given a free hand, the Ouidi Naba chose the most capable candidate. However, before announcing his choice, he said to the Tansoba, "My heart is heavy because I fear that those persons whose hopes have not been fulfilled will resort to violence to get their way." The Tansoba responded, "That will be against tradition and justice. Do not fear. I am here with my army to see that your decision is respected." Having received the support of the Tansoba, the Ouidi Naba announced his choice to the other councillors. They said to him, "Naba! You have expressed our will, and that of all the people." It is not to be understood from these formulas that the other councillors had no voice in selecting the candidate. They did in fact advise the Ouidi Naba concerning the best candidate, but these formulas emphasized that it was the Ouidi Naba, as prime minister, who was responsible for the choice.

The Ouidi Naba's choice of a new Mogho Naba was kept secret until the successful candidate was summoned for investiture. This occurred on the second night of the late Mogho Naba's funeral ceremony. Toward nightfall, the Ouidi Naba secretly dispatched a messenger to summon the successful candidate. The need for secrecy was demonstrated in 1871, when 175 Boukary Koutou forced the committee to name him Mogho Naba. The cir- 643 cumstances were as follows: Mogho Naba Sanum died without male issue, 669 and all his brothers vied for the nam. One of them, Boukary Koutou, was 645 felt to be ineligible because he had been exiled for leading a civil war against Sanum, but like his brothers he hastened to Ouagadougou. Boukary feared that the electors would not look favorably upon his claim, and when he failed to ascertain their intentions he decided upon a *coup d'état*. He gathered an army composed of his supporters and his Gurunsi slaves, and surrounded the compound in which the electors were gathered. One of the electors discovered the army during a break in the deliberations and reported his findings to the Ouidi Naba. The chief minister and his aides

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643 knew that Boukary Koutou was the only person capable of such a conspiracy.
669 Fearing for their lives if they did not nominate him, they immediately
645 sent a messenger to summon him as the successful candidate.[15] Under
normal circumstances, however, there was no coercion of the ministers and
the nominee was quietly brought to the councillors.

645 Wearing a pair of trousers and a sheepskin mantle and carrying a spear
643 in each hand, the nominee entered the courtyard of the compound through
[292] the women's door.[16] He was preceded by the Samande Nabila, who
sprinkled the earth with water. He came up to the councillors and saluted
them, and the Ouidi Naba addressed him as follows: "Before your father
[brother] died, did he designate you to be his successor?" The nominee
replied, "No, Sire! My father has left you free to choose whom you wish,
be he a blind man or a leper!" This question was asked three times, and
645 the nominee responded three times. The Ouidi Naba then made the following
643 declaration: "I am giving you the nam of your father and grandfathers.
551 You must try to conduct yourself as they did when they had the
nam." The Ouidi Naba then listed the names of the territories over which
the ruler had absolute power and authority. The new monarch raised his
two spears in the air, made a speech in which he announced three guiding
principles by which he vowed to reign, and "named a name," that is, suggested
the title by which he wished to be known. For example, Mogho
Naba Sagha II (1942–57) said in his inaugural speech: "Without rain,
there is no life. I will be like rain for the country." He then became
known as Mogho Naba Sagha ("Rain"), a rather fitting title for a ruler
in a country with uncertain rainfall. The present Mogho Naba stressed
in his inaugural speech (in 1957) that he was "solid as a rock." His official
title is now Mogho Naba Kougri ("Rock").[17]

The taking of a new name was only the first step in the elaborate process
645 through which a man became Mogho Naba. Next, the Ouidi Naba
643 took the two spears from the new monarch and removed his sheepskin
mantle. Then he gave him his new white clothes, which included a pair
of trousers, a bonnet, and a sleeveless robe, all made for him by the people
of the Sculougou ward in the capital. Next, he was given a cushion made
by the people of Baramimi. The Baloum Naba then took the closely
[789] guarded namtibo, the sacred amulets of the dynasty, and used them in the
[782] preparation of a potion of millet beer mixed with millet-flour water, part
[776] of which was poured as a libation to the earth goddess, Tenga.[18] The
ruler and the assembled ministers all partook of the potion in a kind of
communion. The ministers then shook the ruler's hand, an act thereafter
forbidden, and departed for their own compounds. The newly elected

The newly elected
monarch secreted himself either at the Samande Nabila's home or else- 643
where in the capital until daybreak. Tradition holds that if he were killed [682]
before being officially proclaimed before his subjects as the new ruler, the
assassin could become Mogho Naba.[19]

The public ceremonies marking the official proclamation of the new 643
ruler's accession to power took place on the following day. Early that 796
morning, the monarch left his secret sleeping quarters and proceeded to
the Koumbi Naba's house. Here he dressed in his white garments and
mounted an old, unsaddled horse. The Baloum Naba then gave him a
sack containing the namtibo, which he placed over his shoulder, and the
Kaizi Naba led him out of the courtyard by the women's door. As the
ruler's horse passed through the gate, his sister, the *Napoko* ("female
ruler"), cried, "The sun has reappeared! The fire is relighted! The earth
lives again!" A large crowd of musicians and warriors who had been
alerted by the ministers shouted and danced as they accompanied the
monarch, who circled the compound three times.[20] The ruler then re-
entered the compound, and this time he came out through the men's door
as a sign of his full status. Here he was greeted by the Ouidi Naba, who [645]
proclaimed in a loud voice, "Mossi people, here is the Mogho Naba!" The
warriors shouted and fired their muskets, and the musicians played. Then
all the dignitaries and their followers solemnly prostrated themselves and
paid homage and swore allegiance to their monarch. He, in turn, listened
attentively when his ministers and some of the elder chiefs gave him advice
about how the affairs of state should be conducted. After each declaration
of loyalty or word of counsel, the people shouted in praise of their ruler.
The Bendere Naba, accompanied by his musicians, then recited the ruler's [644]
genealogy, announced the pledges the new monarch had made to his
people, and acclaimed him by his royal title, "Mogho Naba [X]." From [551]
this moment on, no child born during his reign could bear the ruler's
name, and those persons who already bore it called themselves *Nab'yure*
("king's name").

As the next stage in the ceremony the Mogho Naba, accompanied by 643
his retinue, visited the various wards in the capital. In each he was pro- [621]
claimed ruler and received the allegiance of both Mossi and non-Mossi
ward chiefs. He visited the wards controlled by such men as the Loumbila [641]
Naba, the Sapone Naba, and the Ouagadougou Naba, and at each stop the
ward chief declared, "People of [X], here is your new sovereign." Having
been acknowledged by the leading chiefs of the capital, the new ruler then
returned to his host's house. He emerged later in the day to visit the com- 643
pound of a palace attendant, the Samande Nabila, where he sat under a 641

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641 tree and again received oaths of allegiance from his chief ministers and other dignitaries. He then proceeded to the house of the Ouagadougou Naba (a direct descendant of the aboriginal Ninisi population), where he spent the night. The following morning, his host made sacrifices to his Ninisi ancestors in the name of the new ruler. Once again, the principal ministers and dignitaries appeared and joined in a ceremony of allegiance to their king, but this time they drank a potion prepared with the namtibo and swore that they hoped their ancestors would kill them if they should prove disloyal to the Mogho Naba.

The monarch then left the Ouagadougou Naba's compound, accompanied by the Tansoba and his warriors, and went to Paspanga (a ward in the capital whose name means "to add strength or power") to receive homage and allegiance from his assembled district chiefs. Along the way, he met symbolic opposition from the candidates he had defeated. However, these "hostile" forces were quickly routed by the Tansoba and his [173] army. According to one Mossi tradition, when Sagha I (ca. 1787–1803) was elected Mogho Naba, his father's brother, Kaoko, tried to kill him during this mock battle. A vigorous civil war ensued, in which some district chiefs joined Kaoko. Sagha defeated and killed Kaoko and many of his supporters, and then swept through the country, executing rebellious district chiefs and placing his own sons in power.

At Paspanga the sovereign sat under a tree, surrounded by his ministers, warriors, and musicians. The onlookers formed two facing ranks in front of the sovereign, between which the district chiefs and their retinues walked up to pledge their allegiance. Those members of the royal sub-lineage who had been put to flight by the Tansoba's army returned and rendered homage to the monarch. Emissaries from the autonomous Mossi princes also greeted him.

When this ceremony was over, the Mogho Naba instructed his retainers to provide food and drink for his subjects and guests, and retired for the night. He remained at Paspanga for a week, during which time he greeted those persons who had not arrived in time for the first day's ceremony. On the seventh day, the monarch and a few courtiers and retainers retired to Djmvousse ("king's resting place"), where the district chiefs who had come to Ouagadougou for the installation brought him presents before returning home. The Mogho Naba remained at Dimvousse for a period ranging from several weeks to three years, depending on whether the earth-priests advised him to inhabit his predecessor's palace or build a new one.[31] When at last he ended his retreat, a large crowd of horsemen, warriors, and musicians accompanied him to his palace, where he set up his permanent court.

fathers died. In this way the rulers not only retained the allegiance of the 644
boys' fathers but had a unique opportunity to determine whether these boys were qualified to succeed to the nam.

The life of a page was confining, even if sometimes very rewarding. Pages were bound by the demands of the ruler, whose every wish had to be satisfied immediately. A quarrelsome ruler was a terror to his pages, who had to bear silently his insults and blows. On the other hand, a considerate monarch permitted or encouraged his pages to profit from the small [662]
political intrigues in which they were invariably involved. Prospective district chiefs "made friends" with pages to find out whether their suits were progressing, or to whom they might usefully offer gifts. The pages used any money they might procure to buy clothes for themselves, to supplement the clothing and presents they received from their relatives. Every page was "adopted" by one of the royal wives, who prepared his meals and took care of him. In return, he helped this woman cultivate her field when his presence was not required by the monarch. When a page completed his service satisfactorily, he received a pughsiudga as a wife. If his work had not been satisfactory, he was simply dismissed.

The only woman who played any significant role at the court of the 644
Mogho Naba was the Pughtiema, his head wife. She was the only wife 595
to whom he presented his friends, and whom he allowed his subjects to 643
visit. This woman, who was commonly the widow of the former Mogho Naba, was often chosen because she was past childbearing age: she was thus older and wiser than the other wives, less preoccupied with children, and above the sexual jealousies that may often develop in polygynous households. She arbitrated among the wives and stood *in loco parentis* to the younger ones, whom she instructed and advised. She served also as official hostess to the ancestors during the annual propitiatory rituals. It [782]
was her duty to prepare the millet beer and millet water for the sacrifices to the ancestors, who were believed to feast at her hut before they visited the rest of the household. In addition, it was she who prepared to accompany the Mogho Naba to La each day. Lastly, it was her duty to introduce any new royal wife to the ancestors, and to ask them to watch over this potential mother of their descendants.

The ruler inherited some of his wives from his father; some he received from his many friends and vassals; and others he selected from among his pughsiudse. Crozat reports that Mogho Naba Wobogo (1890-96) allegedly had a hundred wives. Crozat did not see this many women at Wobogo's [114]
court, understandably, since most of a ruler's wives lived in villages, where they were guarded by eunuchs.[28] Of the substantial number of royal wives

● 643

595 who did live at the palace, only a small minority prepared the ruler's meals
644 and shared his bed. Dim Delobson reports that Mogho Naba Kom II
(1905–42) had thirty-seven wives. His son, Mogho Naba Sagha II (1942–
[177] 57), had twenty.[24] The present Mogho Naba, Kougri, recently married
according to Western tradition and is officially monogamous.[25] There seems
[178] to be a general trend toward fewer wives among Mossi chiefs.

643 Mossi rulers never married for the purpose of forming state alliances,
and their marriages had no political significance. The Mogho Naba's mar-
581 riages were exogamous with regard to the royal lineage and to his mother's
582 minimal lineage. Aside from these restrictions, however, the Mogho Naba
could marry women from any Mossi lineage or group, including serfs,
slaves, and foreign populations. It is said that when Mogho Naba Sanum
(1850–90) despaired of having an heir by a Mossi woman, he took a Fulani
643 wife.[26]

585 The Mogho Naba had no formal wedding ceremony. The task of intro-
[302] ducing a new wife to the royal harem fell to the Pughtiema. She and her
assistants welcomed the wife in a prescribed fashion. First they shaved all
the hair from her body. They then bathed her in warm water to which
shea butter and ritual herbs had been added, and during the bath they re-
cited the ruler's genealogy to impress her with her new status.[27] The Pugh-
tiema advised her on the need for proper deportment, and warned her that
[301] adultery was punished by death. To close the ceremony, a smith fastened
to the girl's wrists and ankles the silver or brass bracelets that identified
her as a wife of the Mogho Naba. If the bride was still a child, she was
often allowed to return to her father's house until she reached childbearing
age. If she was past the age of puberty, her marriage was consummated
without further ceremony, and she joined the ranks of the ruler's wives.

644 The wives who lived in the palace were divided into three groups. The
595 first group included the wives who lived with the Pughtiema in a section of the palace harem called the *zaka sanga* ("large courtyard"). These women were all past childbearing age and no longer received nocturnal visits from the Mogho Naba. They had their own fields in the vicinity of the palace and cultivated them with the aid of the samande-kamba, the pages they had adopted, and their own children. The women of the second group, those of the *zagbilin* ("small courtyard"), were mostly in their thirties or forties and still sexually active. They received occasional visits from the Mogho Naba, but fewer than his younger wives. These women also cultivated their fields with the help of the young men of the court.

The third group of wives, the *dogunba* ("keepers of the household"), was the most important. The dogunba prepared the ruler's meals and satis-

fied his sexual desires. Since these women were in the monarch's favor, 644
they were better dressed than the other wives and received more attention 595
from him. The dogunba generally cultivated a large field in common with
the aid of the palace retainers, but some insisted on cultivating their own
fields instead. Like the other wives, the dogunba usually lived in huts of [342]
their own. Childless women sometimes shared the same hut until one of [591]
them became pregnant and had to set up a hut for herself and her child.

Those wives who lived in special villages under the supervision of eunuchs rarely went to the palace. Usually, they were past childbearing age or had lost favor with the monarch. They cultivated plots of land, spun cotton, and prepared locust-bean flour, locust-bean "balls," and shea butter. They kept a part of the produce for their own use and sent the remainder to the palace stores; the same arrangement obtained for all three categories of palace wives.

The Mogho Naba's heir was usually born while his father was still 644
Crown Prince. He was never born in his father's compound because, unlike 595
other Mossi women, the wife of a Mogho Naba or Crown Prince returned 843
to her father's house for confinement. As soon as she announced
her pregnancy, the Pughtiema or one of the older wives held a ceremony
to notify the ancestors. Once the rite had been completed, the wife was
sent to her relatives for fear that she might be harmed by her less fortunate
co-wives. If the child was a boy, the ruler or Crown Prince was notified 644
immediately, because the important privileges of a first-born hinged upon 595
this notification. Since several wives of the Mogho Naba might be pregnant 843
at the same time and errors might be made about the onset and duration 428
of pregnancy, primogeniture had to be established immediately to forestall 643
dynastic conflicts. For example, it is commonly believed that the present
Doulougou Naba was born several days before Mogho Naba Sagha II
(1942–57) but was deprived of the nam because the messenger who brought
news of his birth reached Mogho Naba Kom after the messenger who announced
Sagha's birth. Undoubtedly, such allegations were sometimes [578]
used to foster and support dynastic rebellions.

So strong was the fear that the most likely heir to the nam would be harmed by jealous co-wives that the child and his mother never returned to the palace except for brief visits on ceremonial occasions. The young prince remained with his mother's relatives and was guarded and educated by servants sent from the palace. If his father was on the throne at Ouagadougou when the boy reached the age of ten, he was formally installed as chief of Djiba district, the traditional seat of the Crown Prince. If his father was not on the throne, the boy remained with his mother's relatives and went to Djiba when his grandfather died and his father was installed as Mogho Naba.

000 went to Djiba when his grandfather died and his father was installed as Mogho Naba.

The origin of Djiba's status as the seat of the Crown Prince is rather
634 obscure. The people of the neighboring district of Nobere say that Djiba
644 was founded by a "companion" of their own founder, Naba Biligo, one of
173 the numerous "eldest" sons of Mogho Naba Oubri, the implication being that Djiba was supervised by Nobere. However, no one seems to know when Djiba's status changed or what happened to the ancient family who used to govern it. The consensus is that in earlier times the heir presumptive to Ouagadougou did not necessarily become chief of Djiba, but was given any district whose chieftainship was vacant when he came of age. Dim
[114] Delobson reports that Djiba became the district of the Crown Prince sometime during the seventeenth century, when Mogho Naba Zombere, who had reigned for sixty years, found it necessary to establish a permanent seat for his heir.[28] However, Dim Delobson does not report under what conditions Djiba was chosen, nor does he say what happened to the local ruling lineage when this transfer took place. That the transfer was carried out in the manner reported by Dim Delobson is not doubted, because each new
[558] Mogho Naba obtained districts for his relatives in this way. Through this process, the people of the ancient ruling lineages were usually reduced to
[613] the level of commoners, and this is apparently what happened to the rulers of Djiba.

634 The first public sign that the young prince was being prepared for the
643 nam came in the form of a summons commanding him to go to Ouagadougou to be installed as Djiba Naba. On his way to the capital, he visited several villages where the local Tengsobadamba made sacrifices to the earth goddess in his name. He took this opportunity to meet with the district chiefs and their assembled village chiefs; he was entertained by them; and in turn he distributed gifts to the old women, whose praises were considered especially effective in bringing health and long life. When the boy finally arrived at the capital, he lodged at the compound of the Kambo Naba, head of the palace guard, until the Mogho Naba and his ministers installed him as chief of Djiba.

The installation rites for the Crown Prince were very similar to those already described for the Mogho Naba, and identical to those for the district chiefs. During the ceremony, no mention was made of the fact that the prince was the son of the Mogho Naba. The only special feature was that when the prince went into the courtyard after the ceremony to render homage to the Mogho Naba, he sat in an area assigned to him by custom. When the ruler appeared, the prince followed the Gounga Naba, who was pro-

634 As soon as the prince arrived, the Ouidi Naba made preparations to
644 receive the chiefs of such local districts as Manga, Nobere, and Basgana,
who visited the prince and brought him wives, livestock, and money. Dur-
ing a seven-day period, other chiefs and well-wishers visited the new chief
[431] and offered him gifts. When this period was over, the new Djiba Naba
gave wives to the noble members of his escort and livestock, money, and
kola nuts to the commoners and serfs, and sent the group back to Ouaga-
dougou. Then he settled down to the life of a typical district chief, govern-
ing his villages in the name of the Mogho Naba, paying him tribute, and
settling disputes among his villagers. Dim Delobson reports that the other
[431] district chiefs and the heads of such principalities as Boussouma and Con-
quizitenga formerly sent presents to the Djiba Naba when they sent their
[651] annual tribute to the Mogho Naba.[31] But this contradicts all that I heard
and saw of the relationship between the royal heir and the other district
chiefs. They treated him as an equal and showed no deference to him either
in private or on ceremonial occasions. As a matter of fact, in the presence
of the Mogho Naba, the royal heir actually effaced himself before the other
district chiefs. This behavior served to preserve the concept of equal access
[643] of all members of the ruling clan to the ancestral nam. The Mogho Naba
was head of the ruling group as well as political leader of the Mossi. His
son, on the other hand, was often a junior in terms of age and generation
within the ruling group, but politically he was on the same level as the other
district chiefs. The sovereign could not show by his behavior that his son
was either actually or potentially superior to the other Nanamse; nor could
the prince presume to be haughty because of his strategic but accidental
relationship to the actual possessor of the nam. Had he tried to do so, he
might have ruined his chances of being selected to take over the "house"
of his father and his father's fathers.

643 The relations between the Mogho Naba and his children, including his
644 heir, were characterized by formality—at least in public. Nevertheless, the
ruler took a vital interest in the training and welfare of the youthful Djiba
593 Naba. Mogho Naba Wobogo (1890–96) reportedly had the Ouidi Naba
634 and the Baloum Naba of Djiba executed because the Crown Prince died
under strange circumstances while under their care. Yet the Mogho Naba
was not expected to enjoy seeing his son and heir, because of the Mossi
father's traditional anxiety regarding those individuals who would profit
most from his death. At the assemblies of district chiefs called by the Mogho
Naba, the royal heir was not even greeted by his father; moreover, the heir
usually stood at the edge of the assembly and left without attending the
customary feast. However, there is considerable evidence that the Mogho

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Naba regularly saw his son in private, and that the prince often interceded successfully with his father for the lives of rebels or criminals. 644 593 634

The Mogho Naba seldom saw his younger sons, who usually remained with their mothers' patrilineages until they were old enough to be assigned district chieftainships or sent to live in villages controlled by the Baloum Naba. He was rather suspicious of these boys, who, if certain traditions are believed, were not averse to plotting the death of the Djiba Naba in order to succeed to the nam. The district chiefs also feared these younger sons, in whose favor they were often deposed by the Mogho Naba. Almost all of the dynastic changes that occurred in the Mossi districts seem to have stemmed from a ruler's attempt to find districts for his brothers or his younger sons.

The ruler was less concerned with the welfare of his daughters and female relatives. Their marriages seldom benefited the political system. As a matter of fact, the behavior of a royal princess usually strained the relations between her husband and the ruling lineage. The reason for this was a status conflict: as wives, they had low prestige in Mossi society; but as relatives of the Mogho Naba, they enjoyed high status. This contradiction made it difficult for them to accept the low estate of wives. Consequently, they clashed with their husband and often dominated the women and co-wives in his compound. Since few Mossi men tolerate strife within their household, these noble wives often withdrew from their husband's home and established one of their own. The one exception to this pattern was the ruler's eldest daughter, the Napoko, whose ceremonial duties at his death and during the interregnum compelled her to remain loyal to the husband chosen for her by the king. Like her brother, the Crown Prince, if she violated any of the traditions and thus became ineligible to fulfill her duties to her father and to the state, she endangered the country at its weakest moment, when the government was being transferred from the deceased Mogho Naba to his successor. 643 644 593 [562]

The death of a Mogho Naba was usually attributed to foul play or supernatural forces. When Mogho Naba Sagha II died in 1957, a report from Ouagadougou stated that the Governor of the Upper Volta had felt constrained to have an autopsy performed to quell rumors that the monarch had died of poisoning.[31] The obvious function of such rumors was to dramatize the gravity of the situation during the interregnum. 643 761

Because the Mogho Naba was usually accompanied by a page, it was often this boy who witnessed his death. It was the page's responsibility to notify the Baloum Naba, who notified, in order, the Ouidi Naba, the Larhalle Naba, the Kamsaogho Naba, the Gounga Naba, the ruler's children, 643 763 [644] [645]

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763 the Tansoba, the members of the royal sub-lineage, and the district chiefs.
The Tengsoba of the Ouagadougou area was also notified. Because he was
[645] a descendant of the aboriginal Ninisi population that "owned" the land, he
[793] supervised the burial ceremony.

The Mogho Naba's death was kept secret, and no mourning was allowed
[701] until the Crown Prince had arrived at the capital and the Tansoba had recruited an army to protect the realm against would-be usurpers of power. Then the cry was raised in the palace, to reverberate throughout the land,
643 that "the fire had gone out." Once the ruler's death had been announced,
764 the country was plunged into an interregnum, which was characterized by
669 ritual and often by actual anarchy. The people in the towns immediately looted the markets and stole their neighbors' goods; the prisoners and captives in stocks were released by their guards; the nakomce in all the territories, districts, and villages subjected the local populations to robbery and pillage; and the members of the monarch's babissi began their intrigues for power. The traditional sanction for this anarchy was that only when people suffer during the breakdown of political control do they really appreciate the sovereign's role. The Mossi declare (with some truth) that no one was safe during the interregnum. However, as we shall see, the ruler was symbolically kept alive, and the country was never without effective political leadership.

766 When the Tengsoba arrived at the palace, he was joined by five heredi-
644 tary funeral chiefs: the Pazany'tengsoba, the Tampouy Naba, the Benghin
643 Naba, the Toghin Naba, and the Tanghin Naba. In the ceremony that followed, he gave permission for the royal grave to be dug. Meanwhile, the ruler's body was prepared for burial in the traditional manner by his female relatives and laid in state in the zongo. These women kept vigil over the body, shouting and weeping. Only the five ministers of the realm and the male members of the ruler's babissi were allowed to pay homage to the corpse within the zongo. All other mourners had to pay their respects to the monarch's eldest daughter, who, as Napoko, was dressed in the dead sovereign's clothes and sat in his place before the zongo. As her father's symbolic representative, she held daily court and received greetings and homage from all visitors until a new ruler was chosen. The drummer who sat by her side declared to all visitors, "You say that the Mogho Naba is dead! Well, who is that sitting there? Tell me! Is that not the Mogho Naba?"

766 The ruler was buried the day after he died, at the end of an elaborate
643 ceremony. Libations were poured out to the ancient rulers, and sacrifices
[782] made to them. All the important officials and members of the royal mini-

mal lineage segment except the pretenders to the throne shaved their heads 766
as a sign of mourning. The royal pretenders donned sheepskin mantles to 643
signify that they were willing to "eat the nam." Once the ruler had been
buried, the country settled down to an uneasy peace until the eighth day,
when the funeral ceremonies took place. In the meantime, the Napoko symbolically [701]
held daily court, and the Tansoba's army acted as a check against
the attempts of ambitious princes to seize power by force of arms.

Two days before the funeral, the Kamsaogho Naba selected the Kourita, 644
who was to replace the Napoko as the living symbolic representative of the 766
dead Mogho Naba. The person chosen to be Kourita was usually a young 783
son of the deceased king, but since this person was banished from the capital,
most of the royal wives hid their young children or fled the palace with
them.[23] Once the Kourita had been chosen, the Kamsaogho Naba performed [171]
a ceremony (similar to those connected with the divine kings of
the Near East) during which the youth was given one of his father's horses,
dressed in his father's clothes, and given his father's youngest widow as a
wife. He was then paid the homage due the Mogho Naba, and after receiving [431]
many gifts from the dignitaries, he was banished from Ouagadougou
forever. As he went through the country, he was treated like the Mogho
Naba and given many wives and presents. If he should chance to return to
Ouagadougou or see the new Mogho Naba, either or both of them would
be killed by the ancestors. Many Mossi districts seem to have been founded
by exiled Kouritadamba. These men were undoubtedly among the numerous [634]
"elder" sons of past kings who are said to have "refused" the nam and
gone to live in the districts now governed by their descendants.

The choice and banishment of the Kourita heralded the funeral rites, 766
which were characterized by numerous animal sacrifices to the ancestors in 644
the name of the deceased ruler. On the afternoon of the first day of the 643
funeral, the Crown Prince mounted a horse and left the palace by the [782]
women's door. The Napoko then took the bridle of her brother's horse
and led him and an immense crowd of cavalry, armed warriors, and musicians [788]
around the palace walls three times. After the third round, the Napoko
demanded that her brother give her a personal servant as a present; he hesitated,
but finally granted her request. The Napoko was then lifted up by
the warriors, who shouted as they carried her home. The funeral thus came
to an end.

All Mossi potentates tried to emulate the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou 631
in matters of pomp, ceremony, and government.[24] Their courts were inferior 184
to his, but only because they were less powerful and less wealthy. 643
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Some of the more important rulers, such as the heads of the Yatenga, Fada-N'Gourma, and Tenkodogo kingdoms, were chosen by local electoral colleges, which did not have to seek the approval of the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou or notify him of the choices made. Their authority, as we have seen, was supported by claims of equality with Ouagadougou. But, with the exception of the Tenkodogo ruler, they were actually farther removed from the main line of royal descent than the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou. The autonomous Dimdamba had their own electoral colleges, which in some
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cases were made up of men related to the electoral-college members of the
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Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou. (For example, the Ouidi Naba of Boulsa was descended from the Ouidi Naba of Ouagadougou.) These local colleges were usually free to nominate and elect the Dimdamba without consulting the Mogho Naba, even though he ratified many nominations.[35] According to Cheron, "The nomination of the Dim of Boulsa did not become definitive until ratified by the Mogho Naba, who was always consulted by the electors and who could impose his own candidate."[36] This was not always true; nor did every Mogho Naba refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of autonomous provinces. Whether he did or not often depended on his strength relative to that of the Dimdamba. Once the Dimdamba had been chosen, however, they were installed with ceremonies similar to those for the Ouagadougou ruler.

631 Like their superiors, the Dimdamba had the authority to delegate power to the Kombemba and Tense Nanamse. Some of them also had the right to grant the nam to a fellow Dim. The Boussouma Naba, for instance, could grant it to the Mane Naba.[37] Mogho Nanamse granted such rights to Dimdamba for various reasons. They might do so on the basis of their relative strength vis-à-vis a particular Dim at a particular time, or because they admired him or were closely related to him. However, a Dim exercised sovereignty in his own name, regardless of whether he was subordi-
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nate to the Mogho Naba or to another Dim. In contrast, the district chiefs and the village chiefs exercised sovereignty on behalf of the Mogho Naba or of the Dim in whose territory they resided.

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The installation ceremonies for the two lower orders of chiefs were not too different from those for the Mogho Nanamse and Dimdamba. For example, when the Nobere district chief died, the provincial minister for Nobere—in this case the Gounga Naba—reported his death to the Mogho Naba. The ruler then summoned one of the deceased chief's officials to the capital to report on the qualifications of all potential candidates for the nam. The provincial minister, in turn, dispatched one of his own representatives to the district to verify the reports he had received. It was only when this

It was only when this
man had returned to the capital that all the nobles in the local ruling lineage 634
were invited to Ouagadougou to press their claims. Only the dead chief's [613]
babissi went to Ouagadougou, even though all nobles subscribed to the traditional concept that "the nam does not belong to any one sub-lineage; it can
be given to any nobleman." Unlike the others, these nobles did not shave [302]
their heads in mourning, thus indicating their candidacy for the nam. [765]
When they donned sheepskin cloaks and carried spears on their shoulders,
they indicated that they were interested in the nam of the district.

Before a candidate for the district chieftainship left for Ouagadougou, 634
he collected livestock, money, clothing, and grain from his friends to give 662
as gifts or bribes to important officials in the capital. When he arrived there, he lived with friends and conducted his campaign from their home. He and the other candidates visited their provincial minister and his colleagues, the Mogho Naba, and other courtiers, giving presents ostensibly as a sign of friendship but actually with the ultimate aim of impressing these people with their generosity. These activities were often very costly; for if the Ouagadougou officials suspected that the candidates were wealthy, they made every effort to obtain as many presents as possible. It was not unusual for candidates for the district chieftainship to remain at the capital as long as "thirty-three" or "sixty-six" days before the officials were satisfied with their generosity and made preparations for the election.

The evening before the election, the Baloum Naba asked each candidate 634
to provide a chicken and a sheep for the evening sacrifices to the namtibo."[illegible] 645
After the morning ceremony on the following day, the Ouidi Naba re- 643
minded the sovereign that a new chief had to be chosen for Nobere district.
The Mogho Naba summoned the Gounga Naba and asked him which can- [782]
didate had the best character and was most capable of taking care of the district—a question which shows that the Mossi never placed primogeniture above the ability to rule."[illegible] The Gounga Naba had already consulted his friends about the matter, but he recounted both the good and the bad qualities of each candidate. At the same time, he hinted which one would make the best chief. He finally told the Mogho Naba that all of the candidates were worthy men, adding, "You can give the nam to any of them." The Mogho Naba then looked around to ascertain whether the other ministers had concurred in the Gounga Naba's implied choice before declaring, "I will give the nam to X, because when his [father, grandfather, or brother, used in the generic or classificatory sense] was alive, he was good to me. The ancestors would be angry if I did not give his [son, grandson, or brother] the nam." With these words the selection was made, and the ministers now prepared to install the successful candidate.

IV

ADMINISTRATION

142 631 [825] [769] THE Mossi always looked to their rulers, especially to the Mogho Nanamse, the Dimdamba, and the Kombemba, to determine administrative policies and to pronounce on all relevant issues. All foreigners who requested information were told, "You must talk to the chief."[1] The Mossi believed that men cannot live without chiefs, and insisted that even animals have chiefs. Mossi rulers were therefore expected to ensure internal tranquillity in times of peace and to protect their subjects and territories in times of war. The expectation that they would also provide impartial judgment is best expressed by a dictum of the Ouagadougou people: "The truth is at Ouagadougou." Finally, Mossi chiefs were held responsible for inducing the ancestors to bring health and prosperity to their subjects. To this end, they supervised and participated in rituals to their ancestors and encouraged the people in every territory, district, village, and compound to do likewise. In return, the people paid homage and allegiance to their chiefs and provided them with the goods and services they needed to support the administrative process.

643 631 642 175 The nature of the administrative relationship between the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou, the rulers of Yatenga, Fada-N'Gourma, and Tenkodogo, and the autonomous Dimdamba was not clear to the early visitors to Mossi country, and remains a matter of controversy. Two conflicting principles were always at work: seniority with respect to the nam and claims of close descent from Ouedraogo and Oubri on the one hand, and relative political strength or military power on the other. The stronger a ruler, the less he deferred to his lineal seniors. He might even claim a supremacy over them that came close to a claim of seniority. When Barth visited the Sudan in 1853, he was told that the Mossi country was "split into a number of small principalities, almost totally independent of each other, and paying only slight homage to the principality of Woghododogo." Barth reports, however, that the Dim of Boussouma was "probably the most powerful of the Mossi chiefs at the . . . time, especially with regard to cavalry." Similarly,

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Binger reports that the Mossi were divided into "a number of confedera- 631
cies, more or less independent of each other, whose chiefs were vassals of 642
Naba Sanum, the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou." He found, nevertheless, 175
that although the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou claimed suzerainty over [486]
the Yatenga, he could not grant travelers permission to enter that territory.[3] [648]

Crozat, who visited the Mossi in 1890, just two years after Binger, was told repeatedly that the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou had the right to control the destinies of all chiefs who claimed descent from Ouedraogo and Oubri. But he, too, found that the principalities were self-governing and mutually independent, and were united only by the weak bond that attached them all to Ouagadougou. Noting the claims of the people he encountered that Ouagadougou was still supreme, Crozat suggests that "time and circumstances have weakened this sovereignty. The ruler of Ouagadougou is regarded by the other chiefs merely as their senior and the head of their family. They seldom obey him, yet they recognize that in certain cases he has the right to give them orders." Like many Frenchmen who came after him, Crozat concludes, "One will be struck, as I have been, by this political organization in which the waning of the central authority has led to a true feudal system closely reminiscent of a certain period in our own history."[2]

Delafosse tells us that "the authority of the emperor [of Ouagadougou]
does not seem to have been ignored within his borders except in very rare
instances. The vassal kings, who were brothers, sons, or nephews of the
emperor, usually obeyed him. In any case, the emperor did not interfere [648]
with the administration [of their territories], and required nothing from [651]
them except the payment of taxes and the raising of contingents for any
expeditions he might have to organize against outside enemies (the emper- [701]
ors of Mali, Gao, or Segou; Moroccan pashas; etc.). In return, the emperor
granted his support to those of his vassals who were unable to command the
obedience of their subjects or tributaries."[4]

It appears, then, that although the independent rulers and autonomous 643
princes sometimes recognized the supremacy (if not the seniority) of the 642
Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou, they were relatively free to rule as they 681
wished. As possessors of the nam, they claimed and exercised the right to 628
administer the peoples of their realms. It appears, furthermore, that the 175
rulers of Ouagadougou seldom challenged the independence of their confreres in Yatenga, although the latter often disturbed them. For example, when Yatenga Naba Kango (ca. 1754–89) sacked and burned the Ouagadougou district of Yako for sheltering refugees from a civil war, the Mogho Naba did not come to the aid of the Yako Naba. Nor did he take offense when this chief, in order to regain his seat, was compelled to switch his

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642 allegiance to the Yatenga. The situation lasted throughout Kango's reign,
631 "but as soon as he died, the Yako chiefs ceased to pay allegiance to his suc-
628 cessors and paid homage, as before, to the court of Ouagadougou."[4] About
fifty years later, Yako district was again captured by a Yatenga ruler, Naba
175 Tougouri (ca. 1806–22), who deposed the reigning chief and installed his own. The deposed chief fled to his sovereign at Ouagadougou for aid and safety. He did receive sanctuary and eventually reconquered his principality, but there is no evidence that the Mogho Naba gave him any active support. Similarly, when another Yatenga ruler, Naba Totebaldbo (ca. 1834–50), once more conquered Yako as well as Riziam, another dependency of Ouagadougou, the Mogho Naba took no action. It was only after Totebaldbo's death that Riziam seceded from Yatenga and returned its allegiance to Ouagadougou. Yako did not submit to Ouagadougou's rule until some time later, when it revolted against Totebaldbo's son.[5] Similarly, both Mogho Naba Sanum and Mogho Naba Wobogo had difficulty in controlling a civil war between Yatenga and Yako which they felt would cause European travelers to think ill of the Mossi. During Crozat's visit to Ouagadougou, Mogho Naba Wobogo asked the combatants to cease fighting, but his efforts failed because "Yako would have liked to obey, but Yatenga refused."[6]

The Ouagadougou rulers experienced less difficulty with the weaker Tenkodogo kingdom, which seldom attacked their vassals or territories. Instead, the rulers of Tenkodogo often sought the aid of the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou against their enemies or rebellious subjects. For example, when the Busansi subjects of the Tenkodogo Naba rebelled against him in the fifteenth century, Mogho Naba Dawoema of Ouagadougou went to his aid and defeated them.[7] However, when Korongo, the Tenkodogo Naba, asked Mogho Naba Wobogo to help him defeat a contestant for the nam in 1894, the Ouagadougou ruler refused and said he would acknowledge the victor.[8] In this case, personal considerations seem to have dictated the Mogho Naba's reply.

The rulers of Ouagadougou appear to have taken greater interest in the affairs of the Dimdamba. Here again, however, intervention was conditioned by personal considerations, and especially by relative strength. Failure to be prudent in this respect often resulted in disaster. Mogho Naba Doulougou's insistence on punishing Naba Piga (1806–23), a ruler of the Boussouma principality, resulted in his own death. One of Piga's subjects had fled to Ouagadougou to evade punishment, and the Mogho Naba had returned him with the injunction that he should be imprisoned but not killed. Nevertheless, Piga had the prisoner executed. Moreover, he sent a

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disrespectful message to the Mogho Naba asking that a horse which a Fulani 631
had stolen from him and presented to the ruler be returned. Doulougou 642
sent an army to chastise Piga, who quickly fled and later appealed to 628
the Mogho Naba for pardon. No sooner had this pardon been granted than 175
Piga again offended the Mogho Naba by granting refuge to his wayward son, who had been expelled from Ouagadougou. The Mogho Naba subsequently forgave his son, but he decided to punish the recalcitrant Piga once and for all. Piga fled at the approach of the royal army, but Doulougou, who had accompanied his troops, was wounded by an enemy arrow and died shortly after his return to Ouagadougou.[10]

A later Mogho Naba, Sanum (ca. 1861), fought, defeated, and executed Naba Zande of Boulsa for taxing the Boulsa people so heavily that they rebelled. After Zande was succeeded by his brother Yemde (ca. 1863–72), the Mogho Naba continued to intervene in Boulsa's affairs and eventually had Yemde executed. Yemde's undoing was the result of his inability or unwillingness to implement the Mogho Naba's desire—which was contrary to Mossi custom—to elect a ten-year-old boy to the chieftainship of Koupela district. The Koupela chief's brother ignored his young nephew and seized the nam; Yemde sent an army to depose him, but his men were routed. Suspecting treachery on Yemde's part, Mogho Naba Sanum sent an army to defeat and depose him and to place his father's brother in command of Boulsa. Yemde defeated the Mogho Naba's army. His victory was short-lived, however, because the Mogho Naba sent a larger army and routed his forces. Yemde fled to the territory of the Boussouma Dim and requested asylum. The Boussouma ruler, Ligidi, did not wish to incur the wrath of the Mogho Naba and dispatched Yemde to Ouagadougou. Yemde apparently convinced the Mogho Naba of his loyalty, but he was executed because he had inadvertently violated the rule that no descendant of a Kourita might see a Mogho Naba and live.[11]

Ligidi, in turn, found himself in conflict with the Mogho Naba. After surrendering Yemde to his sovereign, he had proceeded to Boulsa and seized some of the prisoner's property. At first the Mogho Naba paid no attention, but when he had made peace with Yemde's son, Kiba, he ordered Ligidi to return the property. Ligidi refused to do so and consequently became involved in a series of wars against Kiba and the Mogho Naba. Ligidi died of natural causes before peace was restored, leaving a legacy of hostility between Ouagadougou and Boussouma. Either in complicity with the ruling Mogho Naba (Wobogo) or in an attempt to gain his favor, the electors named Ligidi's brother, Kom, to the nam and ignored his son and rightful heir, Venewende. This unfortunate young man had no one to

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631 turn to, and fled to Wobogo for safety. Wishing to maintain good rela-
642 tions with Kom, the Mogho Naba forced Venewende to return to Bous-
628 souma, but with the injunction that he should not be killed. Nevertheless,
175 the Boussouma ruler had the young prince executed. The angry Mogho Naba threatened reprisal and declared that "if the Boussouma chief was not careful, it would be too bad for all his people, because they would fare as badly as their chief."[12] He did not have an opportunity to carry out his threats, however, because the French arrived soon afterwards.

Whereas some Mogho Nanamse took an active interest in the affairs of their Dimdamba or even tried to control them, others hesitated to interfere with disobedient or recalcitrant subordinates, especially when they fought and quarreled among themselves. Mogho Naba Oubya did not interfere when a Boussouma ruler, Pougoula (1745–67), bragging that no one in the nation was strong enough to depose him, arrogantly annexed the Ouagadougou province of Pisila and chased its ruler into Yatenga. Pougoula then gave the chieftainship to the fugitive's son, on condition that he should henceforth recognize his sovereignty.[13] On another occasion, a recalcitrant Boussouma Dim called Zabo (ca. 1767–84) defeated and punished the people of the Mane principality for rejecting the ruler he had chosen for them. They insisted that the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou had given Zabo the right to express his preference for a certain ruler, but not the right of choice itself. They appealed to Mogho Naba Waraga for help, but he ignored them. It may well be that Waraga was too involved in a war with the recalcitrant Riziam Naba to interfere, but there is no evidence that he ever censured Zabo. Again, Mogho Naba Sanum apparently took no part when Zende (ca. 1862–76), the ruler of Tema principality, and Totoabo, the ruler of Yako, joined forces against the ruler of La in a dispute over an abducted wife.[14] Perhaps, like other Mossi rulers, he did not care to deal with men who fought over women.

The relationship between the Mogho Naba and the Dimdamba, then, apparently varied in accordance with the persons involved and their relative strength. Sometimes they quarreled and fought; sometimes the Mogho Naba remained aloof from the Dimdamba's affairs; and sometimes the Dimdamba obeyed their sovereign and came to his aid. The one aspect of this relationship that seems to stand out, especially when the Dimdamba had no serious grievance, is their reluctance to fight against the Mogho Naba. Even Piga, the most belligerent in a long line of quarrelsome Boussouma rulers, always fled when Mogho Naba Doulougou attacked him, because "he did not wish to oppose his sovereign."[15] As we have seen, Yemde did fight against Mogho Naba Sanum, but he did so mainly be-

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cause he thought Sanum had attacked him unjustly. For such acts of war, 631
the Dimdamba involved usually lost their lives, and in at least one such case 642
a Dim was turned over to the Mogho Naba by another Dim. We have seen 628
that Dimdamba occasionally came to the aid of the Mogho Naba against 175
another Dim.

A question of some importance is whether this relationship between the 643
Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou and the rulers of independent kingdoms and 631
autonomous principalities was characteristic of Mossi society or a rather late 642
development. Was warfare the natural concomitant of a system in which 628
the normally powerful Ouagadougou ruler was sometimes too weak to com- 174
mand allegiance from his peers and subordinates? Did the Mogho Naba 114
resort to warfare as the only possible means of exercising his authority when his commands were challenged or ignored? Delafosse states, "Sometimes . . . , especially in very recent times, discord arose between the emperor [of Ouagadougou] and some of his vassal kings: thus Naba Sanum had to fight against the desire for independence of the kings of Boussouma and Boulsa."[10] Delafosse seems to suggest that the Mossi people were undergoing a period of stress when the Europeans arrived, and were faced with significant new administrative problems.

Here Binger appears to support Delafosse's view:

> Ever since he acceded to the throne, [Mogho Naba Sanum] has been compelled to govern the Mossi with unmitigated despotism. His fear of losing power led him to take such severe measures that he was forced to relax them. As soon as his major vassals saw this, they took these concessions as signs of fear and began to conspire secretly against him. Today, the chiefs of Mani, Boussouma, Yako, and Koupela represent forces with which Naba Sanum will have to reckon. . . . Before long, the Mossi empire will break up; the country will organize into confederacies like those of Beledougou and Yatenga.[11]

It is not completely clear, however, whether Binger really understood the intricacies of the Mossi political organization. He lists as "vassals" of the Mogho Naba such territories as Mane, Kaya, Koupela, Bonsa, Boussouma, Djitenga, Boulsa, Dakay, and Doulougou, as though they were all related to Ouagadougou in the same way. In reality, some were autonomous and some were directly dependent on the Ouagadougou ruler. It is possible that at the time of Binger's visit, the relations between the Mogho Naba and his subordinates were so fluid that the outsider had difficulty in understanding them. If this is the case, then the situation in Mossi country had indeed changed when the Europeans came in.

Crozat, who says the Mossi governmental structure was feudal in na-

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631 ture, offers what is probably the best analysis of power relations among the
628 important Mossi chiefs. In commenting upon the Mogho Naba's inability
174 to stop the war between Yako and Yatenga he asks, "How could it be
114 otherwise? With what sanctions could this king without an army back up
his orders if he ventured to give any? . . . In short, when the Ouagadougou ruler speaks, he is sometimes obeyed. If he is, all is well; if he is not, all is still well. Everything remains as before."[18] Crozat was mistaken if he believed that the Mogho Naba did not have a fighting force. What he did not have was a standing army to exercise his power whenever he wished. When he was able to summon an army, he was effective; when he was not, he had little power over any territory but his own. Crozat, like Binger, gives a strange picture of the political relationship between the Mogho Naba and the other rulers. He tells us that in the Mossi political hierarchy, "after the ruler of Ouagadougou comes the ruler of Boussouma, then the Yatenga ruler, and then the ruler of Yako."[19] Yatenga was traditionally independent of Ouagadougou, whereas Boussouma and Yako were simply autonomous principalities dependent on the Mogho Naba. It is possible that Crozat mistook the relative power of these various political entities for a hierarchical relationship. It is also possible that at the time of his visit, the Dimdamba felt sufficiently powerful to ignore the traditional hierarchy as far as their political relationship with other rulers was concerned, and were simply acknowledging relative gradations of power.

643 Clearly, the sovereignty of the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou over the
642 independent kingdoms and autonomous principalities depended chiefly on
628 military might. The stronger a Mogho Naba was, the more actively he tried to control the internal administration of the autonomous principalities and to exercise police powers over them or on their behalf. However, most Mogho Nanamse were content to claim superiority or control over the independent kingdoms and refrained from meddling in their affairs.

643 Within the Mogho Naba's own kingdom, however, the situation was
635 different. Here, like other important Mossi rulers, he directed the admin-
634 istrative apparatus. For administrative purposes, the kingdom of Ouaga-
[642] dougou was divided into five large provinces (*weto*; sing. *weogho*; or
solem, from *so*, "command"). Together they included some three hundred
[161] districts, in which there were over four thousand villages inhabited by some 862,000 persons.[20] (Not included here were districts and villages directly administered by the Mogho Naba.) The provinces were not compact physical entities, because their component units were scattered throughout the country. To be sure, some of the districts within a province were close together or even contiguous, but many others stood alongside districts be-

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longing to other provinces. Provinces also differed with respect to the num- 635
ber of districts they included and the nature and size of these districts. Some 634
provinces were larger than others; some were wealthier; and some were
more difficult to administer.

Each province was administered by a governor, who also functioned as 635
an important minister at the court of Ouagadougou. In the order of their 645
importance, these governors were the Ouidi Naba, the Larhalle Naba, the
Gounga Naba, the Baloum Naba, and the Kamsaogho Naba. Smaller ad- [643]
ministrative units (both districts and villages) were under the direct con-
trol of the Mogho Naba himself, or under the supervision of his relatives
or lesser officials. None of the governors were nobles or descendants of [565]
Ouedraogo and Oubri, but their positions were hereditary. According to 173
one tradition, the first provincial administrators were personal slaves of the 635
early Mossi rulers who were given the task of supervising the activities of 645
district chiefs of noble status. Another, more romantic tradition is that the
man who became the first governor or Gounga Naba was a companion of
Mogho Naba Oubri during the conquest of Ouagadougou. Later, the
Gounga Naba presented one of his friends to Oubri with the request that
the man take precedence over him, be made chief governor, and be given the
title of Ouidi Naba. Oubri allegedly acceded to this request, and later
granted another request of the Gounga Naba that a friend of the Ouidi
Naba be named Larhalle Naba and be made the second governor. The Go-
unga Naba told the Mogho Naba that he preferred to see his friends happy
and that he was content to be third minister. This tradition does not state
when or how the Baloum Naba and the Kamsaogho Naba were named gov-
ernors."[31]

With the exception of the Kamsaogho Naba, who was a eunuch and had 635
no heirs, the provincial governors headed administrative lineages. These 613
lineages provided administrators not only for Ouagadougou but also for the
principalities and districts. Cheron states that the Ouidi Naba of Boulsa
was "a descendant of the Ouidi Naba of Ouagadougou, a great dignitary
who rules a province and sits among the electors of the Mogho Naba."[32]
Many administrative lineages on the district level were descended from [634]
officials sent down by the Mogho Naba with a new district chief in lieu of
one deposed. When a chief was deposed, his administrators, like his rela-
tives, lost their importance and their ties to Ouagadougou.

The Ouidi Naba, called *Moss' ba* ("father of the Mossi") and *Sida soba* 645
("master of the truth"), was the principal administrator and the prime
minister. His titles undoubtedly sprang from his important role in the
election of the Mogho Naba and from his position as caretaker of the king-

645 dom during the interregnum.[33] The latter task was especially suited to a prime minister, since the Mossi regarded the interregnum as the most difficult period in their political life. The Ouidi Naba's administrative tasks
645 were considered so important that he never went to war and was theoreti-
643 cally immune from punishment or execution by the Mogho Naba. This
[203] immunity was necessary, because the Mogho Naba had the right to execute anyone who brought him unwelcome news, and often did so. Since the Ouidi Naba announced good news as well as bad, it would have been folly to subject him to this rule. Some reports in the French colonial archives
[195] state that the Mogho Naba was expected to follow the Ouidi Naba's advice at all times, and could not veto any of his actions. These reports add, moreover, that if a Ouidi Naba considered a Mogho Naba dangerous for the welfare of the country, he could rightfully compel the ruler to kill him-
[762] self. According to Lambert, one Ouidi Naba known as Baba forced Mogho Naba Karfo (ca. 1800) to commit suicide. It appears that aside from waging a long and unpopular war against Naba Djighima of Lalle, this Mogho Naba had seized the riches of his wealthy subjects for distribution among the poor. Moreover, he allegedly dispensed justice without making much distinction between nobles and commoners, which so displeased the nobles that they encouraged the Ouidi Naba to put Karfo to death. Baba sent the sovereign a poisoned arrow and a message consisting of a single word: *ki* (die). Karfo allegedly committed suicide that very night.[34]

Thus, it appears that under certain conditions the prime minister could impeach his "all-powerful" sovereign. We cannot assume, however, that all prime ministers were sufficiently powerful to control the Mogho Naba. Many Mogho Nanamse limited their Ouidi Naba to merely giving advice on affairs of state and insisted that he concern himself solely with his own province.

634 The provinces administered by the five ministers were made up of
635 smaller entities or districts. The districts in the provinces of the Ouidi Naba, the Larhalle Naba, and the Gounga Naba were ruled by the sons
645 and other descendants of ancient Mogho Nanamse. The province controlled by the Kamsaogho Naba was more important. His districts were the wealthiest and among the most populous in the nation, and they brought the largest revenues to the Mogho Naba. The reason for this, of course, was that the Kamsaogho Naba was a eunuch and had no heirs; when he died,
[768] all his riches reverted to the Mogho Naba. The province controlled by the Baloum Naba was the most difficult to administer. Its districts were ruled by the sons of recent Mogho Nanamse who felt that as holders of the nam they were free to appropriate the goods of the population. The Baloum

Naba was responsible for checking these depredations, but he had little 634
coercive force since these nobles were infinitely superior to him in rank. 635

The Mogho Naba held his five ministers responsible for the administration 645 of the districts within their provinces. Therefore they had to function as liaison officers between him and the district chiefs. Every morning, in order of precedence, the ministers reported the news they had received from their provinces since the previous day. At this time, the Mogho Naba also gave them messages for their districts. Later in the day, the ministers presented to the ruler those persons who had come from their provinces to the capital with special grievances, requests, or gifts. Delicate affairs of state were left for the evening, when they were discussed by the Mogho Naba, his minister or ministers, and other important persons.

From all reports, these administrative affairs kept both the ministers 643
and the Mogho Naba quite busy. Binger, who could barely conceal his dis- 644
pleasure with Mogho Naba Sanum, gives this critical but otherwise highly illuminating view of the Mossi ruler's administrative activities:

> The duties of Naba Sanum are not too important. They consist of receiving visits throughout the day. In the morning, at about six o'clock, the drums announce that the ruler has arisen. When he has washed and refreshed himself with a meal, his captives and his wives go to his chamber to salute him. Then comes the turn of strangers, people of the neighborhood, petitioners, and others. They squat before the reception area until the ruler deigns to appear. When a large number of people have gathered, one of the [pages] goes to notify the ruler, who then arrives, sits on his cushion, and casts an amiable glance on the gathering while all present snap their fingers. As soon as Naba Sanum is seated, the petitioners and visitors hurry toward the monarch, throw themselves face down on the earth, and cover their heads with sand. Then each of them gets up and presents a gift of greater or lesser importance, in cowries or foodstuffs, according to what he wishes to ask. Then the [pages] come and say to the ruler, "A certain man has brought a sack of cowries, or a goat, or an ox. He desires to speak to you." The ruler thanks all of them with a *nif kende* (thanks) and retires into his chamber. It is well known that not one out of fifty petitioners was given the opportunity to have his wishes heard. Those who were heard had first spoken to an attendant [662] who, after being paid in advance, had put off their case indefinitely by stating that it would be dealt with next. . . . Since the monarch's days are so well filled, one easily understands why he finds it difficult to deal effectively with the internal and external affairs of his kingdom; in any case, Mossi country is in a period of decadence that will only be aggravated with time.[38]

The activities Binger considered frivolous were, on the contrary, impor- 643
tant for the proper administration of the kingdom. The Mogho Naba had [114]
to receive petitions from the districts and transmit administrative orders to

● 643 his people. We shall see that these orders ran the gamut from demands for soldiers, tribute, and labor, to requests for sacrifices to the ancestors or to local deities for the welfare of the country.

635 645 [203] [634] The provincial governors seldom visited the districts under their control more than once or twice a year. They transmitted official orders to the districts through retainers. Some ministers such as the Gounga Naba kept the sons and servants of district chiefs in the capital to be used as messengers. The district chiefs, in turn, used their sons or servants to transmit messages to their provincial governors or through them to the Mogho Naba. The use of intermediaries in the administration served another purpose: it prevented face-to-face contact, with all its potential for personal animosities, from impairing relations between those whose status depended on their political office and those whose status was derived from membership in the royal lineage.

636 645 634 578 Relations between the provincial ministers and the district chiefs were often charged with hostility and suspicion. The district chiefs regarded the provincial ministers as representatives of the Mogho Naba, and thus as persons to be obeyed. Simultaneously, however, they resented this control by social inferiors. They felt that since they were the descendants of Ouedraogo and Oubri, they should receive orders only from the Mogho Naba himself. Thus, while the district chiefs accepted orders from their provincial governors, they never permitted them to forget their social status or to interfere with the internal affairs of the districts. They felt that this was the prerogative of the royal lineage. Most provincial ministers accepted these restrictions on their activities, but nevertheless saw to it that the district chiefs surrendered the goods collected for the Mogho Naba and governed their people well. Sometime in the 1920's, a provincial administrator went to a district and insulted its chief for failing to deliver the quota of millet set by the French colonial government. The accusation of laziness and embezzlement so infuriated the district chief that he asked the provincial minister whether he had taken leave of his senses and forgotten to whom he was speaking. The person who reported this incident said that if the district chief had not been restrained, he would have killed the administrator on the spot.

Both provincial administrators and district chiefs could impose indirect sanctions on each other if the bounds of propriety were overstepped in either direction. A district chief harried by his minister could not complain directly to the Mogho Naba. But he could, and often did, show his dissatisfaction by lodging with another provincial minister when he went to the capital. He would then ask the official to accompany him when he went

The district chief was relatively secure in the control of his territory as long as he maintained amicable relations with his immediate superiors and administered his district to their satisfaction. A less important but more constant source of concern was his relationship with neighboring chiefs. Many people who can remember the pre-conquest period say it was unsafe for a man to trespass into another district unless he was on an official mission from his chief to another chief. It appears that most of the fighting occurred over strayed cattle and stolen women, with constant raids and counter-raids. The cattle were eaten, and the women kept as wives. Captured men were sometimes sold as slaves, but more often were held for ransom. They were not kept as slaves, since the Mossi were forbidden to enslave other Mossi. Needless to say, this fighting was frowned upon by the Mogho Naba. Since all district chiefs believed in their common descent from Ouedraogo and Oubri and paid allegiance to the Mogho Naba, any fighting among them was not only a sin against the ancestors but also an act of disloyalty to the Mogho Naba. When (as was usually the case) this fighting was of short duration and few people were killed, the Mogho Naba took no official notice of it. But when it became serious, he sent the provincial administrator to stop the fighting and to summon the dissident elements to the capital for trial. The speed and severity with which the Mogho Naba dealt with quarrels within his own realm usually depended upon his strength. At some periods in Mossi history there was little internal disorder, because the rulers were strong; at other periods, under weak rulers, disorder practically amounted to internal chaos. During such periods, the Mossi were kept together only by the bonds of kinship and religion which united them against outsiders.

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The district chief maintained tight control over his own territory and took an active part in its administration. In a district like Nobere, for example, the chief was aided both by an informal council and by an administrative apparatus similar to but smaller than the one at Ouagadougou. The council included men with whom the chief had grown up, members of his immediate family such as his brothers, and a few formal administrative personnel. These councillors visited him every day, brought him occasional gifts, received gifts from him in turn, and discussed informally all matters of interest. Yet, informal as this communication was, it enabled the district chief to know what was going on in his villages. Moreover, these councillors interceded for various villages and gave the chief valuable advice in administrative matters. 634

The formal administrative personnel of the district included a Ouidi Naba, a Baloum Naba, a Tansoba, and lesser officials with titles identical

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565 time safeguarding his position within the district and toward the Mogho
634 Naba. For, as already pointed out, the district chief who failed to protect
his subjects as well as to rule them was deposed and executed by the sovereign.

692 The promptness with which the lower courts dealt with litigations left
662 little time for pre-trial bribery, and there is general agreement that the traditional courts were just. Of course, some lower chiefs were known to
[695] have been unfair and to have taken bribes. However, they were always in danger of having their verdicts appealed to Ouagadougou.

695 The Mossi believed in and acted on the dictum that "the truth is at Ouagadougou." They were convinced that they could obtain justice from
643 the Mogho Naba if from no other chief. If a man was not satisfied with
692 the ruling of a lower chief, he was free in theory to seek a higher verdict,
634 and this influenced the kind of justice rendered on the lower level. As a rule, however, the district chiefs did not favor appeals to Ouagadougou. They felt, like most Mossi, that the less their superiors knew about their activities, the better. Thus, the district chief used all of his influence to prevent cases from being appealed to the capital. Some district chiefs were not above coercing litigants into such abstention. They even threatened them with reprisals if the verdict should be unfavorable. But the greatest deterrent against such appeals was the expenditure of time and money. The docket of the Mogho Naba's court was always crowded, and the suitors often had to remain at the capital for as long as three months before they were given a hearing.[9] During this period they often spent more money than the action was worth. Marc states that the word "Ouagadougou" means "the place where one becomes thin," a reference to the amount of money litigants had to spend while waiting for their cases to be heard.[10]

When the object of a lawsuit was the inheritance of cattle, the litigants sustained a double loss. As soon as they asked that the case be taken to the capital, the district chief impounded the cattle. While the case was pending he appropriated the cows' milk, and when the case was settled both he and the Mogho Naba received some animals. Thus, suitors were usually under a great deal of pressure to resolve their problems on the district level. However, if they were determined to go to the capital, they were permitted to do so.

The district chief always sent one of his retainers to the capital with the litigants. The group went directly to the district's provincial minister, who was empowered to hear the appeal and decide whether it should be brought before the Mogho Naba or returned to the district court. If he decided to send it to the Mogho Naba, he placed it on the docket and told the

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litigants when it would be heard. On the day set he took his charges to 643
court, where they waited in the company of the litigants from other districts 692
and from the wards of the capital itself. 634

The procedure of the Mogho Naba's court differed little from that of the district chief's court. When called upon, the litigant stated his case, called witnesses, and underwent cross-examination by his opponents and by ministers of the Mogho Naba. The litigants were not allowed to look at the Mogho Naba while they spoke, but had to kneel forward on the ground with their faces turned away from him. The Mogho Naba himself seldom looked at the litigants and rarely questioned them. When presented with a complex case, the Mogho Naba, like the district chief, retired with his councillors and canvassed their opinion in order "to ascertain whether or not their verdicts were similar to his own." Nevertheless, he could not follow their advice. He had to make up his own mind, and when he returned to court he rendered his verdict, which could not be appealed. If those who received an unfavorable verdict showed any displeasure, they were taken outside by the palace guards and executed.

The penalties imposed by the Ouagadougou court were usually more severe than those handed down at the district level. The main reason for this was that aside from cases involving residents of Ouagadougou, the lawsuits tried by the Mogho Naba were serious ones and often had been
sent to him on appeal. Moreover, the Mogho Naba's court was alone em- [681]
powered to impose the death penalty within the kingdom of Ouagadougou. It should be noted here once more that district chiefs often executed criminals. But it should also be reiterated that the Mogho Naba never surrendered his prerogative to the district chiefs. They simply usurped it, and if they used it judiciously they were not penalized.

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Those nobles and commoners who were convicted for serious crimes at 696
the monarch's court were killed by the royal executioners. Moreover, in 692
contrast to the procedure at the district court, the criminal's property was 634
often seized before his execution. The reason for this is not clear, but it
was probably related to the lack of a personal relationship between the court and the relatives of the accused, which enabled the Mogho Naba to impose a harsher penalty. The district chief, it must be remembered, lived in close association with his people and was influenced in his behavior by social relationships. Interestingly enough, the Mogho Naba did not keep the goods seized, but allowed them to be distributed among his executioners.

Crimes against the person or office of the Mogho Naba were punished [687]
with greater severity than crimes against the district chief. Any man who was seen speaking to one of the ruler's wives and who did not happen to

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696 be related to her was tried and executed. In some cases, he was put to death
692 without a trial. Adultery with a royal wife was considered so reprehensible
634 that both adulterers were publicly beaten to death. Their bodies were
[687] denied burial and were thrown into the bush to be eaten by vultures. The
[684] Dapore Naba and the Baglere Naba seized and retained the man's property.

Men who committed treason against the Mogho Naba were usually
687 killed before they could be tried. Chiefs and nobles who were suspected of
643 treason and who consented to come to Ouagadougou for trial were deposed
692 and executed if found guilty. Those who were found innocent were
released and sent back to their chiefly duties. The sole exception on record
to this general rule was the case of Naba Yemde, a Dim of Boulsa province.
[669] He had fought and defeated the forces of Mogho Naba Sanum, and when
the Mogho Naba sent a larger army and routed him, he was treacherously
delivered to the monarch by another Dim. Sanum found Yemde innocent
of treason, but had him executed because he had violated another rule: as
the descendant of a Kourita, he had come face to face with the Mogho
Naba, thus jeopardizing the monarch's life. This exception is always cited
by the Mossi when the inevitability of execution for treason is brought up.
Actually, a person accused of treason rarely went to court. He either took
poison or died in battle against the royal forces. As a posthumous punishment, his compound was burned, his property seized, and his relatives and
[613] servants sold into slavery outside the country. Thus, the supreme penalty
was not merely the death of a traitor but the permanent banishment of his
entire lineage.

ruler to grant asylum to Mogho Naba Wobogo in 1897. He adds that it was probably the injunction in the pact that they should never meet which prevented the ruler from personally receiving Wobogo.[12] 648 175

A ritual pact also bound the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou to the ruler of Dagomba. He sent him goods from the estate of the previous Mogho Naba as well as gifts for yearly sacrifices on the grave of Nyennega, the Mossi progenitrix. There are reports that the Ouagadougou ruler also exchanged annual presents with the Ashanti ruler, but it is not known whether these were courtesy gifts or goods sanctioning ritual pacts.

The ritual pacts among Mossi kingdoms and between them and their neighbors appear to have derived from actual or putative kinship ties. This seems to be supported not only by the traditions of the Mossi but also by those of the surrounding peoples. Whatever their origin, these pacts seem to have afforded their beneficiaries a remarkable degree of freedom from external aggression. It is possible that the Mossi and their neighbors really believed in the efficacy of supernatural sanctions, for purposes of mutual protection. But one suspects that it was the relative weakness of these various groups that caused them to rely on supernatural agencies rather than military might for protection. As will be pointed out below, the Mossi (and probably all of their important neighbors) had considerable difficulty in building and maintaining a fighting force sufficiently large to wage protracted or large-scale wars against foreign groups. 174 648 776 789

The Mossi kingdoms seldom fought among themselves, although their leaders quarreled over status and committed aggression against each other's territories. For example, the Ouagadougou rulers, who claimed suzerainty over Yatenga, often tried to impose their will on that kingdom. Yet, although they were usually rebuffed by the Yatenga Naba, they never tried to resolve the issue by force of arms. In fact, even when a Yatenga ruler appears to have given the Mogho Naba just cause for war, little fighting actually took place. Several times the Yatenga rulers seized such principalities as Riziam and Yako, which were dependent on Ouagadougou, but in no case did the Ouagadougou rulers wage war against them. In 1890, Crozat witnessed Mogho Naba Wobogo's attempt to stop a war between Yatenga and Yako. The Yako people wanted to obey their sovereign and stop the war, but the Yatenga monarch refused to do so.[13] 628 642 643 175

Crozat attributes the ineffectiveness of the Mogho Naba's authority over brother kingdoms to the fact that he had no standing army with which to enforce his rule. While relative strength may have been and probably was the main reason for the Mogho Naba's lack of aggressiveness, the ritual pact that prevented the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou from meeting the

628 642 643 175 [648] Yatenga Naba (and other rulers) or treading on his territory should not be overlooked. The suggestion that force was not the only consideration was lent force by later events. The French conquest later reduced the rulers of both Ouagadougou and Yatenga to impotence and obviated war between them, yet they did not meet until 1946—some fifty years after the conquest. They met then only because they had to represent their subjects at a meeting to plan the restoration of the Upper Volta and reunite all the descendants of Oubri and Ouedraogo into one territory.

Relative strength obviously played an important part in determining whether one Mossi kingdom interfered in the internal affairs of another. For example, when a Tenkodogo ruler asked a Mogho Naba to help him suppress Busansi subjects who had rebelled, the Mogho Naba readily complied.[14] But when a fratricidal struggle over the nam broke out in Tenkodogo in 1894, the Mogho Naba decided not to intervene even though he was asked to do so.[15]

628 643 669 175 The central governments of the various kingdoms found it necessary to wage war against their subordinate territories at regular intervals. In the Ouagadougou kingdom, most of these wars seem to have been administrative actions against a prince or district chief who had contravened an order from the Mogho Naba or refused to pay tribute. The Dimdamba were the Mogho Naba's most rebellious subordinates, and it was against them that he fought most of his wars. Characteristic of these wars was the series between Naba Ligidi (1866–90), Dim of Boussouma province, and Mogho Naba Sanum.[16] Ligidi had seized and turned over to the Mogho Naba the recalcitrant Naba Yemde, then Dim of Boulsa, and confiscated the rebel's property. Later on, when the Mogho Naba had made peace with Yemde's son, Naba Kiba, he asked Ligidi to surrender the seized property. Ligidi refused to do so, and the angry Mogho Naba sent the royal army into his territory. The army sacked and burned several villages and retreated. Ligidi's forces skirmished with the rear guard but abandoned pursuit near the Ouagadougou border.

Ligidi took his revenge by helping a district chief who had rebelled against Naba Kiba. While he was thus engaged, the royal army again attacked and defeated him. Four days later, it reinvaded Boussouma, engaged Ligidi's forces at a place called Goudri, and won a brilliant victory. Despite Ligidi's furious counter-attacks, the army captured his capital, Ouayougya. The ruler's army finally returned to Ouagadougou, satisfied that Ligidi was thoroughly beaten. But the Mogho Naba had underestimated Ligidi's tenacity. For the next ten years, this Dim waged war against his fellow Dimdamba. The Mogho Naba finally grew tired of his depreda-

tions and launched another expedition against Ouayougya. The expedition 628
failed because of a lack of water, and the army was forced to return to Oua- 669
gadougou. The war would have continued had not both Mogho Naba Sa- 175
num and Ligidi died in 1890. 643

It appears that the Mogho Naba tolerated fighting among his immediate subordinates, and seldom intervened in local wars unless one of the combatants openly flouted his authority. For example, when the autonomous principality of Riziam attempted to wrest control of Salmetenga district from Boussouma province, Mogho Naba Doulougou did not intervene. He knew that Salmetenga owed allegiance to Boussouma, but was perfectly willing to allow its ruler to transfer allegiance to Riziam. When Boussouma was on the brink of defeat, the Salmetenga Naba fled to Ouagadougou to seek asylum. The Mogho Naba sent him back to Naba Piga, the Boussouma Dim, with the request that he be allowed to live. Piga was so angry with the chief that he ignored the Mogho Naba's request and executed him. This incurred the wrath of Mogho Naba Doulougou, and he sent an army to attack Piga. Fortunately, for this disobedient Dim, the Mogho Naba died and the attack was called off.[17]

The reaction of Mogho Naba Koutou to fighting among his subordinates was more typical. He did not interfere in a long series of battles between the principalities of Riziam and Mane which culminated in 1866 when the Riziam people seized, imprisoned, and executed several Mane merchants who had gone to buy salt in Timbuktu. Mane appealed to its brother province of Boussouma for aid, and Riziam appealed to a Fulani chieftain for reinforcements. Before a battle could ensue, however, the [648] Boussouma Dim, Naba Siguiri, died after drinking some millet beer, and the fighting was called off. Naba Kom of Mane then went off alone with his army, defeated the Fulani, and killed their chief, Sekki. When Ligidi (the chief mentioned above) succeeded his father, Naba Siguiri, he elected to continue the war against Riziam with the help of the Mane army, but the battle was inconclusive. The stalemate did not satisfy the bellicose Ligidi, who attacked Riziam once more in 1871, burning villages and seizing property. The Riziam people finally rallied and halted him. They ambushed his soldiers when they tried to retreat, and harried them so thoroughly that Ligidi had to call off the war when slaughter and thirst decimated his ranks.[18]

Similarly, Mogho Naba Sanum did not interfere when one of his own 62
district chiefs, the Salogho Naba, was attacked and defeated by the ruler of 669
Tema principality. Nor did he enter the fray when another of his district 175
chiefs was attacked and defeated by the Boulsa Dim. The fighting in both 643
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669 cases was over women. The Tema Dim successfully defended his prin-
175 cipality against a Zittenga district chief who not only had the effrontery to
● 643 demand the return of a wife who had fled into Tema but also invaded the
634 principality when she failed to return.[19] The Boulsa Dim attacked and
defeated the Salogho Naba when he refused to repatriate a man and woman
convicted of adultery who had fled into his district. It is possible that in
each case the Mogho Naba refused to become involved in a squabble over
women, but it is more likely that he refrained from participating in a local
war that did not threaten the security of the entire country.

628 Many Dimdamba made it a practice to help each other in wars against
669 common enemies. In the middle of the nineteenth century, Naba Zende of
175 Tema and Naba Totoabo of Yako joined in a war against Naba Sebogo of
La when Sebogo refused to repatriate one of Totoabo's wives, who had fled
into his territory. The two victorious allies burned villages in La and forced
Sebogo to flee for his life. They searched for the woman, but she was never
found. The successors of the three rulers remained embittered by this war
and eventually renewed the fighting. On this occasion, Naba Tanga of
643 Tema and Naba Sagha of Yako fought against Naba Kombase of La. But
this time Yako and Tema were unable to defeat La and had to withdraw.
There is no evidence that the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou took any part
in these wars.[20]

643 The Mogho Naba appears to have taken a greater interest in wars be-
648 tween his Dimdamba and non-Mossi populations, and to have profited by
175 them occasionally. When the followers of a Fulani chief named Karfo
carried off some cattle belonging to the Boussouma people, the Boussouma
Dim, Naba Siguiri, threatened war if the animals were not returned. Karfo
not only refused to surrender the cattle but insulted Siguiri in his reply.
Siguiri marched against the Fulani, killed Karfo, seized ~~all~~ the cattle he
could find, and sent some of the "most beautiful animals" to Mogho Naba
Koutou.[21]

634 Although the Mogho Naba tolerated wars among his Dimdamba, he
669 apparently forbade the district chiefs under his direct command to fight
578 among themselves. As we saw in Chapter IV, some such fighting did take
628 place, but the Mogho Naba seems to have ignored it in most cases because
of its relative unimportance. The Mossi, on the other hand, magnified this
local fighting, which they called *tengkom* ("civil war"), and which con-
sisted of mere skirmishes between villages or neighboring districts, with
few casualties. In fact, the Gounga Naba once stopped a war between dis-
tricts after only nineteen persons had died. But as a rule, districts seldom
if ever fought among themselves. The actual combatants were villagers

634 3. Finally, a third lot, composed of young girls and young boys, was distributed
721 among the warriors and put into their charge. The boys will
567 be employed until further notice as grooms to the warriors; later on, those
who prove themselves useful and docile will be kept. The others will be
175 sold at the first opportunity. The girls will be given in marriage to warriors
who distinguish themselves.[44]

721 The military campaigns of the Mossi, in contrast to their slave-raiding
643 expeditions, appear to have been well organized. When the Mogho Naba
644 felt that a war was necessary, he summoned his five provincial ministers and
701 the Tansoba to a parley. If war was decided upon, the Tansoba was given
[645] full charge of all operations. This man, chosen from a hereditary clan of
warriors who lived in a village called Tansob'tenga in Sapone district, was
listed among the Mogho Naba's courtiers but seldom appeared at court
unless war was imminent. His duties as chief warrior were considered so
dangerous that he constantly sought out religious practitioners for supernatural
aid. Nevertheless, a war minister who was good and brave was not
expected to live very long. If he did live to become gray-haired, the other
courtiers made fun of him by pretending that his graying head could only
be the result of his having carried a sheep captured in warfare on his head as
a present to the ruler.

701 Once given a mandate for war, the Tansoba collected his magico-religious
721 apparatus and prepared the requisite sacrifices. He then asked the
644 provincial ministers to notify the district chiefs to assemble with their warriors
under the leadership of the local Tansobadamba, who were often
[202] members of the Tansoba clan. When the district chiefs received this notice,
they beat their *zongagondo* (war drums), and the local administrators sent
[410] orders for men to the village chiefs. The village chiefs, in turn, beat their
war drums to summon their noble cavalrymen and commoner foot soldiers,
who came armed with bows and arrows, spears, swords, and clubs, with or
[278] without iron tips. The tips of the sharp weapons were often covered with a
vegetable poison derived from a shrub of the Strophanthus species. Some
[410] of the men also carried guns after firearms were introduced among the
[177] Mossi from the desert region and from the coast. Many carried rawhide
[714] shields.

As soon as the village contingents had assembled and had gathered their
701 provisions, they marched to the district centers. Then they proceeded
726 either to the place of battle or to Ouagadougou. In the latter case, they
became part of the royal army and were joined by the forces of those princes
who were prepared to honor their obligation to the Mogho Naba. For
[648] example, when the French invaded Ouagadougou in 1896, the Boulsa Dim
sent his prime minister "at the head of an army to aid Mogho Naba

Wobogo. However, he did not have to intervene, because while still en 701
route he heard that Ouagadougou had fallen."[38] Thanks to this type of aid, 726
the Mogho Naba was able to gather quite a large army, a fact that contra- [648]
dicts Crozat's belief that the Mogho Naba was a "king without an army."[39] [643]

The early Mogho Nanamse used to accompany their armies into the [114]
field, but this practice was later abandoned and was revived periodically
only by the more adventurous rulers. (The last ruler to die in warfare was 643
Mogho Naba Doulougou [ca. 1800].) However, it was the Mogho Naba's 701
duty to greet the army when it came to Ouagadougou, to beat the royal war 726
drum, and to turn the troops over to the Tansoba. This officer served as [644]
commander in chief of the army, and was assisted by the Gounga Naba, [645]
a provincial minister, who served as his aide-de-camp. The Gounga Naba
was expected to die rather than retreat in battle, especially if the Tansoba
was killed. Two other ministers, the Kamsaogho Naba and the Larhalle 645
Naba, also accompanied the army. The later Baloum Nanamse did not 701
venture into battle, because they had to attend to the personal needs of the 726
Mogho Naba. In early times, however, they accompanied their sovereigns [643]
into battle and fought alongside them. The Ouidi Naba never went to war,
because it was his duty to look after the kingdom. He had to ensure the
interests of all the people even if the royal army was defeated, the country
invaded, and the ruler killed or forced to flee. The Samande Naba went to
war and served as chief of the infantry.

Scouts preceded each district contingent as the army marched off to 726
battle. Within the contingent, the younger warriors marched in front, 704
followed by older men. It was the duty of the more experienced warriors
to make sure that the younger men did not break ranks and run under the
stress of battle. Behind the foot soldiers came the cavalry, composed of
nobles and of the few commoners who possessed horses. Behind these came
the district chief, surrounded by his own palace guard. Several heralds [634]
known as *yumba* (sing. *yuma*) accompanied the district forces to exhort [203]
them to fight. As the men marched to battle the yumba shouted:

> Men! Your ancestors were not slaves. They were men. They were stronger than anyone else. They did not bathe with water; they bathed with blood. Do you wish to return home to drink millet water and eat bread? Never! A man does not eat bread or drink millet water; a man fights. Your ancestors were not afraid of anyone; you must not be afraid of anyone. Even if you are killed today, you must march ahead, beat your enemies, and take their villages. You must not be afraid!

Mossi armies on the march used scouts to keep a sharp lookout for the 726
enemy or for any evidence that he was aware of impending attack. The [764]
tactics these scouts used to avoid detection, such as camouflaging themselves

VII

THE ECONOMIC FOUNDATION

THE REVENUE for the support of the Mossi chiefs and their governmental 652
system came from many sources in a variety of forms. The Mossi of [643]
Ouagadougou held that "the Mogho Naba is master of everything" (*Mogh
Nab n so fa*), and when they referred to the control he and his chiefs exercised over their goods and services, they said, "The commoner rears his [539]
livestock for the chief," and cited the proverb "The snake gets whatever is
in the belly of the frog."

Since the Mossi were, and still are, primarily an agricultural people, the 651
products of the soil were the main source of revenue. The Mossi chiefs did 423
not own the land, but they controlled it and assigned land rights to their [181]
subjects. The Mossi believed that land had no value apart from people, [427]
and, conversely, that people could not exist without land. As they said,
"Land is the mother; it fed the ancestors of this generation; it feeds the
present generation and its children; and it provides the final resting place
for all men." Therefore, a Mossi chief never hesitated to give anyone permission to use unoccupied land. [427] It was in his interest to do so, because the
more subjects he commanded, the greater were his revenue and prestige.
An unpopular chief was censured not by a withholding of tribute and [626]
presents, but by a mass exodus of his subjects to another area.

Through the administrative hierarchy, the common people contributed 643
to the support of the various levels of government. The Mogho Naba 651
periodically received agricultural produce from all his subjects. Through 796
the village chiefs, the village people sent part of their produce to the district chiefs, who forwarded it to the provincial ministers. They, in turn,
delivered it to the central government during a ceremony appropriately
called "Soretasgho" ("completion of the road"). This event occurred at the
end of the harvest festival, after all the crops had been gathered in.[1]

To open the ceremony, the provincial governors' retainers began to clear
the paths leading from the governors' compounds to the palace, for they had

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651 become overgrown with grass and weeds during the rainy season. This
clearing was done to within a few yards of the palace, but was not com-
796 pleted. Early in the morning of the day chosen for the actual rendering of the agricultural tribute, the retainers placed baskets of produce along these paths. During the morning ceremony, the Ouidi Naba presented a basket of millet to the Mogho Naba. Then the Bendere Naba, acting as Sore Naba ("chief of the road"), signaled on his drum, and the men with baskets who were waiting on the uncleared portion of the paths, preceded by drummers and men with hoes, axes, and other tools, began to move forward. The men in the processions raised a din, shouting, singing, drumming, and pretending that the task of clearing was very difficult. From time to time, the more energetic among those who were not carrying bundles ran ahead of the others, turned somersaults, and then, going through the motions of warriors in battle, pranced back into the procession. All the processions came to the shed occupied by the royal drummers and deposited their burdens. These were later retrieved by the palace staff and stored for use in the royal household.

643 The royal household was also supplied with produce grown by the royal
644 wives. Foodstuffs for guests and fodder for the ruler's horses were provided
by the people of the Bilbalgo and Dapoya wards, which were under the
241 general supervision of the Kam Naba. Two or three times during the agri-
cultural season, this official recruited extra help from these wards to help
[464] cultivate the fields. In recompense for this *sosogha* (work bee), the laborers
[465] were given food, drink, and kola nuts from the royal household. At the
243 end of the year, the harvesting and threshing of the grain from the Mogho
643 Naba's fields was the occasion for an elaborate ceremony, "Mogh Nab'
644 kawinre" ("threshing the ruler's grain").[2]

796 To begin this ceremony, the Mogho Naba summoned a local earth-
[791] priest, the Manougoudougou Tengsoba, to the court. This man, a descend-
[792] ant of the Ninisi, had to perform the propitiatory sacrifices to the earth deity
who was symbolized by the threshing floor. After the sacrifices were completed, the Kam Naba went to the threshing floor with the young men of the Bilbalgo and Dapoya wards, who threshed the millet gathered there. The next morning they all returned to the threshing floor with the Bendere Naba and his minstrels, who recited the Mogho Naba's genealogy and sang praises to his ancestors. The drummers then beat out work rhythms and traditional drum patterns to which the workers danced while scattering the millet far and wide. Finally, the dancing stopped, and the Kam Naba drew a line on the threshing floor, dividing the pile of millet in two; the Bilbalgo people gathered one half, the Dapoya people the other. Regard-

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less of the amount of millet harvested from the Mogho Naba's fields, there 643
had to be one hundred baskets full of grain. If the number of baskets filled 644
with the Mogho Naba's grain fell short of the mark, the serfs and slaves 796
had to make up the difference with the produce of their own fields. The
ceremony concluded with sacrifices to the royal ancestors, after which the [465]
Mogho Naba's wives, daughters, and sisters gave beer and kola nuts to [769]
the laborers.

As head of the central government, the Mogho Naba received revenue 643
in the form of money and livestock which the district chiefs collected from 651
the village people. These were given to him during an elaborate annual 796
ceremony called the "Basgha" ("feast of the royal ancestors"). Several days before this post-harvest festival, the district chiefs and their retainers arrived in the capital and lodged with their provincial ministers. At a designated time during the ceremony, the district chiefs and nobles went to the palace. In provincial contingents and led by their ministers, they walked up to the sovereign's throne and gave the Mossi salute. After they had returned to their places, their servants gave the royal pages the presents they had brought to the palace.

The Dimdamba apparently made their annual contribution to the 631
Mogho Naba at the time of the Basgha. There is one report that they took 651
this opportunity to send gifts to the ruler's son, the Djiba Naba, as well. The 643
Dimdamba customarily sent the Mogho Naba part of the goods they had
seized in combat against non-Mossi peoples, as well as a tax (*fado*) out of [727]
the goods they had inherited from their predecessors.[3] There is also some evidence that the Mogho Naba solicited goods from the Dimdamba at other times. Crozat says:

> During my first visit to Yako, three envoys from Ouagadougou were at the [661]
> chief's house. They were tax collectors. They had come to offer the vassal a silver bracelet sent by the sovereign. The Yako Naba responded by sending horses, captives, and cowries to Ouagadougou.[4]

Crozat could not understand this reciprocity between the Mogho Naba and 631
his vassals, and questions whether the Mogho Naba really collected taxes 651
from them. He concludes that the Mogho Naba did receive taxes, "but 643
these are never given to him except in the form of presents which are 114
reciprocated."[5] Crozat found it puzzling and disturbing that many of the Dimdamba had not given the Mogho Naba any "taxes" for several years. He indicated, moreover, that they did not wish to pay taxes to the Ouagadougou ruler even under the guise of an exchange of presents. This was especially true of the Yatenga Naba, who had not sent the Mogho Naba any presents for six or seven years prior to 1890. Crozat surmised that

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651 because of this delinquency, the Mogho Naba might hesitate to come to
the aid of any of his vassals if a general war broke out. It is true that the
● 643 Mogho Naba did not aid the Yatenga ruler when the French arrived.
114 But whether this was because of his failure to pay taxes, or because the
[648] French conquest of the Yatenga coincided with a civil war there, we shall
[769] probably never know. We do know that many of the Mogho Naba's
vassals came to his aid when the French finally arrived at Ouagadougou.
It is my opinion that the gifts exchanged between Yatenga and Ouagadougou were not "tributary," but were more in the nature of tokens of friendship between two peers.

643 The Mogho Naba and his provincial ministers also received revenue as
645 a function of their judicial roles. The nature and disposition of the fines
692 levied against legal offenders were discussed in Chapter V. The Mogho
651 Naba's fees came in the form of the traditional gifts the litigants gave him
[431] even before their cases were tried. These gifts were never regarded as
bribes, for this would have contradicted the Mossi axiom that "the truth is at Ouagadougou."

643 The Mogho Naba inherited all the property of the Kamsaogho Naba,
651 and claimed all the property of district chiefs who died without close relatives. He also received inheritance taxes (fado) from the estates of deceased
634 district chiefs. In collecting the fado, the Mogho Naba first retained the
768 horse on which the messenger came to announce the chief's death. He
[428] reciprocated by sending envoys with cowries and animals to be offered to
their common ancestors at the chief's funeral. After the funeral, the envoys claimed the dead chief's quiver of arrows to take to Ouagadougou for deposit with those of other dead chiefs. Then they demanded the fado, and jestingly told the heirs that the Mogho Naba would be satisfied with nothing less than "a thousand of everything" (*tusri bumbu fa*) the deceased had possessed: wives, slaves, horses, cows, goats, chickens, articles of clothing, and so on. The heirs pleaded poverty and jokingly gave the envoys a few old and sickly animals, old chickens, tattered pieces of clothing, etc. Eventually, they handed out the fado, which usually consisted of livestock, clothing, food, weapons, jewelry, cowries, and even slaves. Lastly, they gave the envoys the chief's ceremonial horse and presents for themselves.

643 The Mogho Naba and his ministers collected a considerable amount of
645 revenue from the traders who visited Ouagadougou and the larger market
651 towns and village markets throughout the kingdom.[8] The Mossi (especially
439 the assimilated Yarse) were good traders, and they benefited from their
[487] country's strategic location between the Sahara and the forest regions.
According to Barth, some six caravan routes crossed the country, linking

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the Niger River area to the Gold Coast and Togoland. Important stops 645
were made at such Mossi centers as Ouagadougou, Bere, Dakay, La, Mane, 651
Yako, and Koupela.[7] At Dori, northwest of Ouagadougou, Barth found 439
Mossi with "their fine donkeys, which are greatly sought after." He adds [487]
that in addition, [443]

> the people of Mossi supply this market with gabaga, or "tari" [cotton bands], as Arabs near Timbuktu call them, cotton being extremely cheap in their country, so that in the great market places of that country, especially in Kulfela [Koupela, but really at Poitenga a few miles away], an indigo-colored shirt is not worth more than from 700 to 800 [cowry] shells. . . . Besides salt, cotton strips, dyed cloth, kola nuts, corn, and asses, some copper manufactured chiefly into large drinking-vessels is also brought into the market by the people of Mossi. However, I do not think they manufacture the copper vessels themselves, but bring them from Ashanti.[8]

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Dubois, one of the early visitors to Timbuktu, tells us that he saw Mossi men carrying on their traditional trade in that city. Mossi traders dealt in such diverse commodities as millet, rice, manioc, peanuts, honey, kola nuts, peppers, dried onions, tobacco, dried fish, soap, iron, antimony, lead, cotton bands, straw hats, mats, jars, pots, and calabashes. They traded these articles for needles, mirrors, beads, coral, amber, tea, coffee, perfumes, carpets, fezzes, tailored robes, and salt. What impressed Dubois most was that while the merchants from Bamako, Djenne, Sansanding, and Touat enjoyed themselves at Timbuktu, "the great town of pleasures with the freest morals in the Sudan," and spent a great deal of money in gifts to beautiful women, "the Mossi did not waste their money, and left as soon as they had finished their business."[9] On the way south, Mossi and other caravaneers picked up goods from the Yatenga and other northern Ouagadougou provinces before stopping at the capital and then proceeding to the forest regions.

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It is impossible to determine the exact volume of caravan trade that passed through Mossi country, and the amount of revenue it brought to the Mossi rulers. We can get some idea of this trade, however, by examining the customs reports on goods crossing the border between Mossi country and the northern territories of the Gold Coast in the few years just following European conquest.

The official figures for 1901 and 1903 are as follows:[10]

Year	Horses	Head of Cattle	Sheep and Goats	Loaded Donkeys	Bales of Cotton Cloth
1901	126	3,111	18,181	2,095	236
1903	196	6,624	30,392	4,294	269

439 Marc, who had the opportunity to check the volume of this trade in 1904
and 1905, estimates that about 16,000 head of cattle and 75,000 sheep and
goats passed through the two customs posts in Mossi country. Furthermore,
he believes that since "the Mossi also supply in part the markets of Togoland
and the market at Bondoukou [Ivory Coast], one may assume a minimum
annual export of 20,000 head of cattle and 100,000 sheep or goats.
[174] The import of kola nuts is at least 500 tons."[11] It is clear that this volume
of trade could not have been achieved so soon after the French conquest.
[651] We can only conclude that it existed prior to the coming of the Europeans,
and that it brought the Mossi rulers a considerable income.

643 The Mogho Naba's officials collected taxes from all caravans that passed
651 through his capital. The caravaneers also gave the Mogho Naba important
gifts, and he apparently traded with them, even if always to his own
439 profit. Binger states that Mogho Naba Sanum forced horse traders from
[431] the Yatenga and Hausa merchants to sell him part of their commodities
at one-hundredth the purchase price.[12] Crozat reports that Mogho Naba
Wobogo

> appears to have had some business relations with white merchants who came to Salaga every dry season. He sent horses to them in exchange for silver. He claims that he had no reason to be pleased with their integrity, and that the silver they sent him contained plenty of copper. Some traders apparently came as far as Ouagadougou, bringing merchandise of German origin. There was one of them there during my stay. I was told that he was an important *marabout*, a shereef, perhaps an Arab or a Moor, for I was assured that he was very light in color. As was repeated to me several times, his relations with the king were limited to the solemn greetings on Fridays. He never entered the royal hut in spite of being an important marabout. He was at Ouagadougou for about three and one-half months, but he was compelled to return to the coast since the merchandise which he had brought was exhausted. He spoke no Mossi.[13]

439 All the caravans that passed through Mossi country were obliged to stop
651 and give presents to the district officials. Those caravaneers who tried to
634 elude taxation by going through the forest ran the risk of being attacked
by local nobles, who usually confiscated their goods.

The Mogho Naba and the lesser chiefs had "market officials" who taxed
644 the merchants in the markets of their territories. The officials at Ouagadougou,
651 the Kos Naba ("sales chief") and the Raga Naba ("market chief"),
443 were fairly rigorous in their exactions. The Kos Naba collected taxes in
cowries for every cow slaughtered at the market, and also took its hump
and gave it to the Nemdo Naba ("meat chief") for distribution in the royal
household. He also collected taxes on every cow sold in the market, but

did not usually tax goats and sheep. In lieu of this, he occasionally took 644
one or two of these animals from each herd that passed through the market 651
and sent them to the palace kitchens. Donkeys sold in the market were 443
taxed at the rate of 200 cowries each. Horses sold to the nobility were not taxed, but those exported were.

The Raga Naba collected taxes on the other commodities sold at the market. Cotton weavers paid him according to the size of their bolts of cloth, and cotton growers paid taxes on the sales of their raw produce. The tailors and dyers paid no fixed amounts, but were asked to send clothing to the palace. Every donkey- and ox-load of salt entering the market place was taxed. The smiths were not taxed in cowries, but had to supply the Mogho Naba's wives with hoes and the palace personnel with arrow-
heads, spear points, and iron clubs. The jewelers also sent bracelets as [431]
presents to the ruler. There were no fixed taxes on the cereals, vegetables, and cooked food sold at the market, but each day the Raga Naba, accompanied by several pages or retainers carrying baskets, went from vendor to vendor taking several calabashes of their produce for use in the palace. In addition, the vendors of cooked food had to feed the Mogho Naba's young grooms, who were not normally fed by the palace household. The beer sellers were not formally taxed, but they contributed a substantial percentage of their beverage to palace and market personnel, who demanded the customary *lembgha* ("taste before buying") more frequently and freely than ordinary buyers.

There is some evidence (mainly from European travelers) that the traders occasionally found the caravan and market taxes prohibitive. Binger reports that the high taxes exacted by the Mogho Naba were "one of the reasons why Ouagadougou placed second [as a market town] and Mane was the commercial capital of Mossi country." Binger himself was caught in the institutionalized gift system and wrote sarcastically: "On market day [at Ouagadougou] the receipts are good. People bring everything to the palace, whether it be millet, hoes, or peanuts, and everything is accepted. *All this giving is left to the discretion of the donors.*"[14] The italics are Binger's.

Some of the later Mogho Nanamse appear to have obtained a great deal 567
of revenue through the sale of slaves. Most of these slaves were captured 651
in raids among the smaller groups surrounding Mossi territory, such as the
Samo, Gurunsi, and Busansi populations. According to Mangin, Gurunsi 643
and Busansi countries were true granaries for the Mossi, who drew upon
them according to their needs.[15] In early times the Mossi chiefs utilized [464]
these slaves (*yemse*, sing. *yamba*) as agricultural workers, until Mogho

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643 Naba Baongo (ca. 1800-30) decided that it was more profitable to sell
651 them.[16] Subsequent rulers, especially the two Mogho Nanamse who ruled
[464] just prior to the French conquest, sold most of their captives to passing
caravans or in special sections of the larger markets. When other persons
[439] sold slaves in the market, the Raga Naba collected some 1,000 cowries on
each transaction—the largest tax on any market commodity.

The Mossi rulers seem to have benefited even more from the sale of
567 eunuchs, for they had a monopoly over them. The Mogho Naba of Oua-
839 gadougou sent some captured slaves and all recidivous thieves to Teeme-
tenga village in Koubri district, some 13 miles south of the capital, to be
[752] operated upon.[17] So successful were the Mossi surgeons that—in contrast
to specialists in other areas, who lost nine lives for every successful castra-
tion—the mortality among the Mossi was only one out of ten.[18] Some of
[439] the eunuchs furnished by the Mossi were sold as far away as Constanti-
[175] nople, a fact which surprised the French ambassador to Turkey who saw
them there in 1900.[19]

566 In addition to slaves and eunuchs, the Mogho Naba kept a large num-
ber of bondsmen to provide services for him. One group, the Dapore, lived
643 in a ward of the capital called Dapoya, and had a chief, the Dapore Naba,
563 who was himself a Dapore. The origin of these people is obscure, but
621 they seem to have been the children of foreign captives who were brought
to Ouagadougou and placed in the ruler's service. Some of them even claimed that their ancestors had come to Ouagadougou voluntarily and had placed themselves under the care and protection of the ruler. This seems unlikely, however, since the status of these people resembles that of persons captured by Sudanese rulers and installed in special wards as serfs.[20] Some of the Dapore lived in villages of their own and cultivated fields for the Mogho Naba. Others lived in a ward of Ouagadougou, served in the
[839] palace household, and provided the royal executioners. Some were selected
to serve as palace eunuchs, and placed under the charge of the Kamsaogho
[567] Naba. The Dapore were hardly ever sold unless they were convicted crimi-
nals. The Mogho Naba and his chiefs refrained from selling serfs or cap-
tives who had been born in Mossi country. However, they often claimed the sons and daughters of these people as pages or pughsiudse.

The Baglere made up the second group of bondsmen providing services for the Mogho Naba. They, too, lived in a special ward and were headed by the Baglere Naba, one of their own people. Their origin is also obscure: some of them claimed to be descended from Fulani slaves who had run away from their masters and sought asylum in Mossi country; others believed that they were the descendants of foreign captives. The Baglere

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worked for the Mogho Naba in and around the palace courtyard, and in 563
the fields. They also kept his herds and provided him with animals from 643
their own herds. Like the Dapore, they were seldom sold, but they often 643
had to give their sons and daughters to the Mogho Naba. 621

The last group of persons who contributed their services to the Mogho 701
Naba were the Kamboinse. Their origin is also unclear. Most of my respondents 644
claimed that the Kamboinse and their chief first came to Ouagadougou
from the direction of the Gold Coast, that they bore guns, and that
they offered their services as guards to the Mogho Naba.[21] Later on, the
sovereign allegedly assigned slaves to the Kamboinse unit, with the result
that the entire group eventually took on a serf-like character. The Kamboinse
guarded the Mogho Naba's palace and seized for him the goods of
persons whom he condemned to death.

The services performed for the Mogho Naba by his pages and other 644
youthful retainers also contributed significantly to the support of his administration.
We have already seen how these young men and boys took [203]
care of his every need and functioned as important messengers within the
royal household. The Mogho Naba also had control over the daughters of 643
his serfs, whom he used to obtain revenue from aliens and subjects alike. 566
Periodically, the Mogho Naba gave one of these girls as pughsiudga to a 652
man, thus obligating him to render goods and services to the court. Moreover,
the man had to return the eldest daughter he had by this wife to the
Mogho Naba as a future pughsiudga. In this way, the sovereign had a revolving
store of women through whom he could bind men to himself in
a nexus of obligations, and from whom he eventually received additional
women.[22]

The provincial ministers of the Ouagadougou kingdom occupied such 645
a strategic position within the central administration that anyone rendering [651]
gifts or tribute to the Mogho Naba always gave presents to them as
well. Their main source of revenue, however, came from the villages under
their direct control, and from the retainers who lived in their compounds
and in their wards in the capital. The economic relations between
the ministers and their villages were similar to those between the district
chiefs and their villages, and will be discussed below. The retainers, serfs, 645
and slaves who served these ministers provided them with many of the 566
services their counterparts rendered to the Mogho Naba. They kept their 567
houses in repair and provided them with firewood and with fodder for 621
their horses. Many of them also cultivated fields for their masters. Whenever
the ministers needed extra goods or services, they called on those persons
who lived in their compounds or in their wards. For example, hun-

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641 they might take the lives and property of their subjects. There are many
431 stories of avaricious chiefs who convicted wealthy commoners of spurious crimes and had them executed or banished in order to seize their wealth.
661 There are also stories of twin tricksters, Raogo, a boy, and Poko, a girl,
641 two *enfants terribles* who always succeeded in outwitting and killing avaricious
538 chiefs. When I asked a district chief to explain the significance of the Raogo and Poko tales, he replied that they were "meaningless stories told by children who do not understand how difficult it is for a chief to command and protect men." This remark prompted one of his officials to add that in olden days, people gladly supported the Mogho Naba and his chiefs in order to be safe from their enemies—a statement which might have been made by a conscientious government official anywhere. However, whether
[649] commoners or chiefs, all Mossi believed that men must have government, and that without it chaos would prevail.

642 The Mossi political organization was subject to severe strains. For one
652 thing, its economic basis was not very strong. True, goods and services were channeled to the capital from the smallest areas, and in time this permitted the establishment of increasingly complex governmental structures. Nevertheless, the Mossi fiscal system was not highly developed, and much of the revenue the rulers received came to them in the form of legal fees and gifts. Moreover, most of these revenues were irregular in nature.

631 Despite this fact, the Mossi believed that their rulers were wealthy—
434 and there can be no doubt that they were wealthier than their subjects. Nevertheless, visiting Europeans found little difference between the stand-
643 ard of living of the chiefs and that of the people. Binger would have us be-
[511] lieve that Mogho Naba Sanum bragged so much about imaginary wealth, including 10,000 horses, that he "managed to convince himself of it."[26]
[114] Binger's subsequent remarks about Sanum's resources are illuminating even if somewhat biased, because they throw light on the economic basis of the Ouagadougou kingdom. He tells us that Sanum's revenues were

> not well regulated. He lives on gifts and offerings which people have brought him with the aim of obtaining justice, or to demand something from him. He sometimes sends a band of men to capture slaves in Kipirsi country, or at least supports such ventures. But these revenues, like those of all the black chiefs, are not sufficient, because these men are prone to squander their resources. As a result, these sovereigns are compelled to use expedients in order to procure horses and other commodities. Thus, like the rulers of Tieba, Pegue, and Kong, Naba Sanum still has captives in villages devoted to agriculture, but he does not take proper care of these villages. If he does not receive enough millet in the form of gifts, he must sell his slaves in order to procure it.[27]

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631 434 574 (114) Binger's statement about the "squandering" to which "all the black chiefs" are prone reveals his ignorance of the nature, role, and function of West African chiefs in general and of Mossi chiefs in particular. These men were often the center of redistribution systems that embraced their entire territory. The Mossi chiefs did not necessarily squander their resources when they used them to support their household, their administrative staff, and even visitors to their realm. A rather large portion of the millet the Mogho Naba received was not even used by his own household, but was held for gifts to visiting strangers. Binger himself benefited from the generosity of Mogho Naba Sanum, and he provides us with excellent data about how Boukary Koutou distributed his resources: "I can say that never has a chief given me food, kola nuts, and beer as often as he did. I received things to eat two or three times a day."[28] No Mossi chief could have done less. This was a role that chiefs had to play, and they lost power and prestige if they proved inhospitable or parsimonious either to visiting strangers or to their own subjects.

642 114 Binger's lack of insight into the economic basis of the Mossi political organization also kept him from obtaining a clear understanding of the political system itself. For example, he saw the loose political organization of the Mossi as a sign of decadence, and felt that the Ouagadougou kingdom was too weak to survive for any length of time:

> Before long the Mossi empire will break up, and the country will be organized into a confederacy like Beledougou and Yatenga. This is an event that we Europeans can only favor. Experience has shown us that as soon as a Negro chief commands more than 2,000 people, he dreams of empire; his needs grow, and he tries to expand. Since his revenues are small, he labors under a deficit, which he must remedy with slave raids. In a confederacy the chiefs do not reach this point so rapidly. As soon as one of them begins to rise, the others can band together and nip his ambition in the bud.[29]

It is quite true that many of the political systems in the western Sudan had a loose character similar to that of a "confederacy." This was not due to the vigilance of neighboring chiefs, however. From time to time, such powerful rulers as Ṣundiata, Mansa Musa, Sonni-Ali, El Hadj Omar, and Samory Touré did arise and conquer vast areas, but they were unable to sustain their gains over extended periods.

The political organization of the Mossi was not decadent but structurally weak—its economic base was never strong enough to support a higher degree of centralization. Strong chiefs only tested the limits of the system; they could not change the system itself. 642

VIII

RELIGION AND GOVERNMENT

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642 **RELIGION AND RITUAL** played an important role in supporting and preserv-
[769] ing the Mossi political system. Religio-political ceremonies were centered
[776] around the ancestors (Keemse) and the earth deities (Tengkouga); the
otiose high god (Ouennam or Naba Zid Ouende) had a very minor role.

769 The political importance of ancestor veneration lay in the fact that every
Mossi chief claimed Nyennega of Dagomba and her descendants, Ouedra-
642 ogo and Oubri, as his ancestors. Furthermore, possession of the amulets of
778 Rialle, Nyennega's husband and Ouedraogo's father, legitimized possession
of the nam. In order to rule, a Moaga had either to be a member of a royal
[613] lineage still in possession of the nam or to have received the nam from such
669 a lineage. No Moaga ever tried to usurp the nam of a kingdom or princi-
pality without trying to steal the royal amulets at the same time; nor, if his
778 rebellion was successful, did he ever fail to claim that he had stolen the
642 amulets or had received them as a gift. Thus Yadega, who rebelled against
769 his father's brother, Mogho Naba Koudoumie, and founded the Yatenga
kingdom, declared that he had obtained Rialle's amulets. He claimed that they had been given to him by his sister, Pabre, who had stolen them from Ouagadougou and had thus deprived that kingdom of any legitimate sanctions for power. Thus, when the Yatenga people declare that they are equal to Ouagadougou, they add that the only "amulets" that still legitimize the nam of the Ouagadougou dynasty are the droppings left behind by Pabre's horse as she fled northward.

769 Similarly, all the princes who founded principalities and proclaimed
642 their independence of Ouagadougou defended their action on the grounds
643 that they, being as close to the main line of descent as the Mogho Naba,
were also entitled to rule. The younger sons of deceased Mogho Nanamse
[631] who were banished from the capital as Kouritadamba and who subse-
quently became provincial Dimdamba also stressed their relationship to
[634] the royal ancestors. Even those district chiefs whose ancestors had prob-

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ably been younger sons sent to rule in conquered territories claimed that 642
their ancestors were direct descendants of Ouedraogo and Oubri. Thus, 613
to the Mossi, the power to rule was intimately linked to closeness of descent [634]
from the royal ancestors. The supernatural power of these ancestors, and
the vigilance they were believed to maintain over the affairs of their descendants,
were regarded as important factors in Mossi government.

From the moment when the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou or any other 796
Mossi ruler "drank the namtibo" and thereby received the nam of his an- 631
cestors, he had the right—indeed, the duty—to offer sacrifices to these an- 643
cestors in the name of his subjects. Every night, throughout Mossi country, 769
the Baloum Naba of every ruler performed an act of supplication (Kwaga [778]
Basgha) to the ancestors. He beseeched them to protect the subjects of their [782]
descendants through the night, to maintain peace in Mossi country, and to
grant health, children, and prosperity to all Mossi. This nightly ceremony
was climaxed yearly by an elaborate ritual in honor of the ancestors (called
the Basgha in some areas, and the Pelegha, Filigha, or Kinkiriga in others)
that began at the highest levels of the government and ultimately linked
every Mossi chief and lineage head.

The Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou, like the other Mogho Nanamse and 643
Dimdamba, initiated this ceremony in his own kingdom. His celebration, 769
called "M'barengma," was held at the end of the Mossi agricultural year 241
and after the Soretasgho. Thus, the M'barengma was a New Year's festival 782
in thanksgiving for good crops, as well as the annual Feast of the Dead. 796
A few weeks before the first moon of the new year (the *ki-basgha* or *ki-*
pelegha), the Mogho Naba ordered his soghondamba and samande-kamba [644]
to clean up the palace buildings and courtyards—an activity intended to
notify the ever-vigilant ancestors that preparations were being made to offer
sacrifices in their honor. A short time later, the Mogho Naba gave grain
from his fields to the Pughtiema so she could prepare millet water for the
sacrifices. Present-day Mossi insist that part of the grain came from the
first ears harvested that year and part from those of the previous year. This
was supposed to symbolize the continuity between crops, mirroring the con-
tinuity between the ruler and his ancestors. A few days before the principal [645]
ceremony, the Mogho Naba ordered the Larhalle Naba to pour millet water
and sacrifice chickens on the graves of former Mogho Nanamse.

Shortly before the ki-basgha moon appeared, the ruler had to leave his
palace at night to elude the ancestors, who had been attracted by the prep-
arations and who were expected to be angry when they discovered that the
sacrifices were not yet ready. The unjust ruler feared ancestral sanctions; [626]
the just ruler that his ancestors might want him to join them. One night he

769 796 241 982 went to the home of his Samande Naba, the next to the Gounghin ward, then to Baghin, and subsequently to the homes of other officials. He could not remain long at one place for fear that the ancestors might find him. Every morning, however, when the cock's crow heralded the ancestors' departure, he returned to his palace.

The principal part of the Basgha ceremony was performed on the night when the crescent moon appeared. On that night more than any other, the ruler had to seek refuge elsewhere, because the ancestors visited the palace to accept the sacrifices offered to them by the Pughtiema with the [778] help of the Baloum Naba and the chief eunuch of the harem. The exact nature of this ceremony is unknown, but it is known that the Baloum Naba used the sacred namtibo along with animals and millet-flour water provided by the Pughtiema and the chief eunuch for propitiatory sacrifices to the ancestors. The aim of these sacrifices was to induce the ancestors to grant good crops, health, happiness, and children to their descendants, and to "increase the force of the namtibo."[1] At cock's crow the Bendere Naba sprinkled a flour infusion called *gningmassem* ("water of health") on the palace courtyard so that the ruler might walk upon it when he returned. The Mogho Naba was greeted with drumbeats and escorted to the palace gate. His entry into the antechamber marked the close of this ceremony, and the people retired until later in the day.

The elaborate public ceremony of the Basgha took place in mid-morning. The ministers and important officials, clad in ceremonial garb, arrived at the palace quite early. When the Mogho Naba appeared, the Bendere Naba recited the official genealogy, starting with Ouedraogo and Oubri and ending with elaborate praises of the current ruler. The ministers and their entourage then saluted the Mogho Naba and wished him *Ne tarbo*, which means a happy and prosperous new year for himself and the country. He, in turn, took advantage of this occasion to give many presents to his retinue, and his wives distributed huge amounts of food and drink to the assembly until everyone was satiated. Then all the officials except the Bendere Naba and his group paid homage to the Mogho Naba and departed. The musicians remained at court most of the day, beating their drums and singing praises to their sovereign and his illustrious ancestors. The royal pages kept them well supplied with food and beer, and now and again during the day [431] the ruler sent them gifts among which robes were often included. Whenever the drummers received a gift, they slipped into a rhythmic pattern that [202] signified: *Tompaongo, Wend'kaouss' Naba niore, Wenne wilig vinre,* or, "We bow in thanksgiving for your gift. May God give the ruler long life. May God grant us to be alive next year so that we may do this again." The

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climax of this gift-giving came when the ruler sent the Bendere Naba about 769
19,000 cowries and a slave.[8] This ceremony terminated at nightfall. 241

The close of the Mogho Naba's Basgha heralded the start of similar cere- [431]
monies throughout his kingdom. The heads of the other Mossi kingdoms 631
and the Dimdamba were free to hold their own Basgha when they wished;
but the Ouagadougou ruler's own subjects, including the provincial min- 769
isters, district chiefs, village chiefs, and lineage heads, apparently were not. 796
One reason for this, aside from respect for the ruler, was that the important 782
officials' head wives had to wait for the yeast (*dabili*) from the Mogho
Naba's beer before they could prepare the sacrificial offerings for their hus-
bands' ancestors. This dabili went from district to district or to several dis-
tricts at once, depending on whether the chiefs celebrated Basgha at the
same time or successively. Thus, the dabili from the capital united all the [182]
wives of the royal clan, and made for both a ritual continuity in the venera-
tion of all ancestors and a strengthening of religious and political bonds.

The Basgha ceremonies on the district level were much less elaborate 634
than those held at Ouagadougou, but just as important. The district chief, 769
too, had his buildings repaired and his grain distributed for sacrifices for 796
the ancestors. A few days before the actual ceremony, he ordered the Gande 782
Naba to pour millet water on the graves of recently deceased chiefs and to sacrifice chickens there. As in Ouagadougou, these sacrifices were offered to induce the chiefly ancestors to grant the villagers health, food, and children. Unlike the Mogho Naba, most district chiefs did not ritually hide from their ancestors for several nights prior to the ceremony. Some of them did change their sleeping place within the compound every night, and the court people always slept indoors during this period. On the night of the Basgha itself, however, the district chiefs did not sleep in their compounds.

As in Ouagadougou, the Pughtiema performed the main ceremony by 634
pouring millet water as a libation to the ancestors who visited her hut. She 769
was assisted by the Baloum Naba, who had possession of the namtibo. 796
Apparently, the district chief remained in hiding and took no part in the 778
ceremony. But he was the main figure in the morning ceremony, which 782
differed little from that of Ouagadougou. In some districts the Tengsoba [793]
performed a public sacrifice to the ancestors. He was given the namtibo—sacred objects that had belonged to former district chiefs—and poured libations and sacrificed chickens to all of the chief's ancestors. He also prayed both to these ancestors and to his own on the chief's behalf, and beseeched them to grant long life and happiness to the district population. He also declared that the sacred objects would seek out and kill any enemies of the local ruler, wherever they might be. Once this ritual had been com-

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between the living and the dead," but also to strengthen the political bonds 796
between the Mogho Naba and his chiefs, down to the humblest elder of a 182
Mossi compound.

In addition to the Basgha and Tense, the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou 769
appears to have offered another yearly sacrifice to Tenga. Each year, after 796
the Basgha, the Mogho Naba, the Baloum Naba, and a large entourage re- 782
portedly visited a large earth shrine called Tantibo in the vicinity of Saba- 643
tenga to offer propitiatory sacrifices in the name of all the people. When [778]
the royal party arrived at Sabatenga, they were joined by the Sabatenga
Naba and his Tengsoba. The group proceeded to the foot of the sacred
hill, and here the monarch dismounted, took off his bonnet and shoes, and
climbed the hill. He made the customary Mossi salute at the shrine and
looked on silently while the Tengsoba sacrificed animals and poured liba-
tions of millet beer and millet water in supplication for the health and pros-
perity of the Mogho Naba and all his people.[7]

When evil befell Mossi country in spite of the annual sacrifices to the
ancestors and to the earth deity, the Mogho Naba had to offer additional
sacrifices. If the country was plagued by drought, the ruler went to an [731]
earth shrine in Ouagadougou itself, called "Kom be paspanga" (literally,
"water is strong there"), for a sacrifice. Moreover, he might order all his [634]
district and village chiefs to perform similar sacrifices to the earth shrines
within their territories. In Nobere district, for instance, the district chief [622]
went to the village called Barkago, where, standing barefoot and bare-
headed on the hilly shrine known as Beta, he ordered the local village chief
and the Tengsoba to offer sacrifices for rain and good health.

It is generally believed by the Mossi that when the French attacked 648
Ouagadougou, the deposed Mogho Naba Wobogo made sacrifices to earth 782
shrines. Tradition has it that he sacrificed a black cock, a black ram, a black
donkey, and a black slave on a large hill near the White Volta River, be-
seeching the earth goddess to drive the French away and to destroy the
traitor Mazi whom they had placed upon the throne. When Mazi died,
the Mossi people believed that he had received his just deserts from the
earth shrine for treason. The French believe that Mazi was poisoned.[8]

The district and village chiefs, like the Mogho Naba, were required to 634
make propitiatory sacrifices to the earth shrines on behalf of their subjects. 622
Before taking office, a district chief was ritually shown the major earth 782
shrines in his territory, and he could not ignore their existence and their
need for sacrifices. In a country with major local variations in rainfall and
localized animal and human epidemics, the Tengsobadamba of stricken
areas always called upon the local chiefs to help them propitiate disgruntled [793]
spirits.

634 622 spirits. The chiefs could not refuse such requests, especially when the villagers were poor, because they were regarded as "fathers of their people." 782 In some cases, however, district chiefs had to protect their subjects against unscrupulous Tengsobadamba who took advantage of local crises and tried 661 to prey upon the villagers by refusing to perform the requisite sacrifices 793 unless they received substantial gifts. The ensuing struggle was between 634 the secular and the sacred; between the chief as a representative of the con- 782 querors, and the Tengsoba as a member of the conquered group. It was always resolved in favor of the Mossi chief, who never permitted his Tengsobadamba the same privileges held by religious practitioners in neighboring societies.* The Mossi chiefs recognized that they needed the Tengsobadamba, and many myths recount how invading Mossi chiefs went into the woods where the Tengsobadamba were hiding to beseech and eventually force them to return to their districts so that sacrifices might be continued. On the other hand, the Mossi chiefs always insisted on the primacy of the nam over any other power. They employed the Tengsobadamba to intercede with Tenga for the welfare of their subjects, but they never allowed the priests to control them.

771 The coming of Moslems to the kingdom of Ouagadougou had little 795 effect on the way in which the Mogho Nanamse used the traditional reli- 643 gious system to bolster their political power.[10] In fact, the Mossi rulers later used Islam and its adherents in the same manner as they had used the [797] aboriginal religion. The Moslems first tried to subdue the Mossi in the [648] fifteenth century by persuasion, and later by the jihad. Both attempts [167] failed, but the Moslems finally entered Mossi country as refugees from Sudanese wars. Their fortunes waxed and waned, depending on whether they were befriended by the ruler in whose territory they lived. During [798] certain periods, they were subjected to many restrictions and were forbidden by the Mogho Naba to recite their prayers in public places.[11] At other [797] times, they were left free to practice their religion, and even succeeded in converting several Mogho Nanamse to Islam. Under converts such as Savadogo (ca. 1760), Islam spread into many districts and gave rise to such important local centers as Sakhaboutenga (Dakay).

771 The Moslems in Ouagadougou were represented at the court by their 795 Imam. This person even received his badge of office—a white turban and white robe—from the Mogho Naba, and had to swear in the name of Allah 792 and *Nabiyama* (the prophet Mohammed) to be faithful to him, obey him, and aid him in times of need. However, he did not have to drink the namtibo as suggested by Dim Delobson; nor did he have to observe such non-Moslem customs as drinking the millet beer the Mogho Naba provided for

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his guests.[12] On the contrary, when the Imam visited the ruler on Fridays 795
or during important festivals to read from the Koran, the sovereign gave 792
him sweetened millet water and appropriate gifts.

Most Mossi rulers at all levels had Moslems among their councillors. 795
These men were often the only persons who had traveled extensively out- 645
side the country (on pilgrimages to Mecca), and thus could counsel a ruler 648
about how to deal with foreign visitors. Most early European visitors to Mossi country were either helped or hindered (chiefly the latter, it seems) by these travel-wise councillors. Crozat had difficulties with the Moslems long before he arrived in Mossi country proper. When he got to Lanfiera, the Mossi who lived there were alarmed, and refused to help him proceed to Ouagadougou despite his protestations that "I come for the good of all, white and black, that we may be together like brothers, since the same God has made us all." Crozat reports that his plea was in vain because "El Hadj All-Karl declared that he would not receive me, and he will not receive me. El Hadj is wise, El Hadj is prudent, El Hadj knows all, El Hadj does not make decisions without good foresight, and once made, he keeps them."[13]

Crozat had the same difficulty when he entered Mossi country. He tells 795
us, "At Dounse [near Yako], for example, the marabouts did not look 645
favorably upon my arrival, and it took a great deal of insistence on the part 648
of Moussa to convince the Imam, my unwilling host, to present me to the
chief who had expressed the desire to see me."[14] Crozat also found that he 792
had to lodge with the Imam when he arrived at Ouagadougou, and he was assigned the same huts "which had served Captain Binger," who had visited the capital before him. He was disappointed with his reception and declares:

> I already knew from experience what sort of influence these men exercised over the chiefs. As a councillor of the chief, the Imam was overtly acknowledged as the second official in the village, but in reality he often commanded it. The Imam of Ouagadougou, therefore, could do much to help me or to hurt me. My decision to court him might flatter him, and that would be a move in the direction of winning his good graces, which, all things considered, was most important to me. The result was only partly in my favor. I succeeded insofar as the Imam was not hostile to me, but he did not help me as he might have.[15]

These Moslem councillors realized better than most other people what the visits of the Europeans implied for the independence of the country, and they tried their best to counsel the monarchs against receiving such visitors.

Beginning with Mogho Naba Doulougou (ca. 1750) Mossi sovereigns, 771
whether Moslem or pagan, participated in the more important Moslem festi- 795
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795 vals. Being monarchs of the Mossi, they could not do otherwise. A few
643 days before the Moslem feast of Tabaski (called *Kibsa* by the Mossi), the
796 Mogho Naba sent the Imam of Ouagadougou cattle and sheep to be sacri-
184 ficed on the holy day. On the day of the festival, the Mogho Naba and his entourage went to the mosque and joined the Imam and his flock in prayer. After the ceremony the sovereign returned to his palace and ordered that a well-washed sheep be given to the Imam for a sacrifice. This Moslem sacrifice was performed in the palace courtyard, and the Mogho Naba himself held the tail of the animal while the Imam officiated. The Mogho Naba afterward ordered his servants to provide millet water and food for his Moslem subjects. Similar ceremonies were held in all of the districts and villages where Moslems lived.

The feast at the end of the Moslem month of Ramadan was also celebrated by the Mogho Naba and most of the people within the kingdom—a fact that so surprised Binger that he wrote, "It is a most curious fact that, whether Moslem or not, all the blacks celebrate this feast."[16] The Moslems usually flattered the Mogho Naba and the other chiefs by pretending to believe that they had observed the month-long fast (which the Mossi called *no-lwere,* from *nore,* "mouth," and *lwere,* "to tie up") during Ramadan.
[576] Thus, whenever they visited the Mogho Naba or another chief during this
period, they greeted him with the salutation *Ne no-lwere,* which means, "I greet you who are fasting." Similarly, the morning after the end of the fasting period, the ruler and his officials were ritually given millet water "to break their fast." The important point here is that everyone knew that the Mogho Naba's fast was a ritual fiction. Binger, who was with Boukary Naba at the end of Ramadan before this prince became Mogho Naba Wobogo, commented: "Boukary Naba is a Moslem in outward appearance only. When the prayers were about to begin, he asked me whether I was going to worship. I told him that this festival was not in accord with those of the Christians. He seemed to be delighted by the idea that the whites are not Moslems."[17]

Most Mossi chiefs celebrated the end of Ramadan in a grander manner than they did Tabaski. The members of the royal household joined the other inhabitants of the capital in their anxious vigil for the crescent moon that was to herald the start of the ceremonies. There was general rejoicing when the moon appeared, and all through the night palace guards fired shots and launched arrows into the air. The following morning, the Mogho Naba went to the mosque with his courtiers to attend prayers. Then he returned to his palace to await the Imam, who came to offer prayers of thanksgiving. The Mogho Naba gave him presents, and was visited by gift-bearing

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Moslems. In return, he gave them millet water sweetened with honey, millet cakes, meat, and kola nuts. 643 771

The celebration of the festival in the districts was not as imposing as it was at Ouagadougou, but we have Binger's excellent eyewitness account of the festivities at Sakhaboutenga: 634 795 796

> First of all, Boukary sent word that he would like me to accompany him to Sa[illegible]boutenga, where it is his custom to go on the day of the festival. The chief's men spent the entire day attending to preparations: they distributed powder, cleaned guns, tried on harnesses, and polished copper fittings as we would in France on the eve of a great parade. . . . It was an occasion for revelry, and they took full advantage of it. They ate as much as they could, drank a great deal of beer, and fired many rounds of ammunition. . . . In the evening there was a moment of consternation: no one had seen the crescent; however, they consoled themselves by repeating that although it had not been sighted here, it had certainly shown itself elsewhere, and they sat down to drink beer all night long. 771 184
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> Monday, June 11. Early this morning Boukary sent a horseman to Sakhaboutenga to consult the marabouts. The messenger soon returned and assured the chief that the moon will be seen tonight. "All the marabouts have said so." The much-desired crescent appeared for a few moments this evening; shots were fired through half the night, and beer ran in floods. . . . [792]
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> Tuesday, June 12. From four o'clock in the morning, the tam-tams sounded everywhere, and everyone was busy; it is obvious that this is the eve of an important event. . . . Half an hour after our departure we arrived at Sakhaboutenga. We dismounted and camped under the trees at the entrance of the village. Some Moslems from the neighborhood came, greeted Boukary, and offered him some kola nuts in lots varying from five to eight. But they always held them out in a fold of their robe [it being forbidden for a commoner to hand a gift directly to a chief]. A village nearby sent twelve large jars of beer.
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> From afar and from all directions, long files of Moslems emerged from the village on their way to the Imam's for prayers. Several onlookers arrived on donkeys from the surrounding countryside. The religious ceremony took place on a flat expanse to the east of the village. It was an impressive spectacle. The crowd was silent. The faithful, ranged in ranks about 20 feet deep, prostrated themselves and rose again in perfect harmony and with awesome slowness. From time to time the voice of the Imam was raised, and his *amina* [amen] was heard with deep reverence.
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> There were about three thousand persons of both sexes there, almost all of them dressed in white. The *bournous* [robes], the red tarbooshes, and the multitude of black faces lent to the ceremony the grandiose character of an oriental fete. As soon as the prayers were over, Boukary Naba walked up to the Imam of Sakhaboutenga to the sound of tam-tams to receive his blessing and the good wishes of the Moslems, who wished on my illustrious host many horses and warriors. Boukary Naba ordered that the Imam be given a magnificent sheep and several sheepskins full of cowries. He presents this

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of the long Mossi isolation from European activity. In 1886, a German by the name of Krause became the first European to enter Ouagadougou. He left German-controlled Togoland and joined a caravan at Salaga in July 1886 with a load of kola nuts destined for Timbuktu. He arrived in the Mossi district of Bere sometime in August, and remained there long enough to observe that although this was the period of cultivation, there was a severe food shortage. The caravan proceeded to Ouagadougou and remained there until October, when it continued northward.[11] Krause reports that the journey through the Yatenga and Bandiagara region was uneventful, but that shortly after the caravan left Douentza, in December, he received word from the Mogho Naba to return to Ouagadougou immediately. Afraid to disobey, he returned to Ouagadougou in January 1887, tarried there for about two weeks, and then returned to the Gold Coast. Krause gives only a brief topographic description of Mossi country, and says little about the people and their society.[12] His visit might even be doubted, had Binger not visited Ouagadougou the following year and met the person at whose house Krause had lived.

In 1888 Binger left the French colony of Senegal with the sole purpose of reaching the Mossi and placing their country under the "protection" of France if this proved feasible. In many of the towns he passed through on his way to Mossi country, he encountered Mossi men trading slaves, salt, and kola nuts.[13] He also met a future Mossi ruler, Boukary Koutou, who was then in exile at Banema on the outskirts of the territory of Ouagadougou. Binger thought well of this prince, and described him as having "an honest countenance. His whole appearance denotes intelligence. He seems to be a just man, but firm in his resolutions."[14] Binger got better treatment from Boukary Koutou than he had from any other African ruler. He writes:

> Boukary Naba . . . treated me with plenty of good will, and had edibles and meat sent to me every day. . . . It is a great pity that I did not find Boukary Naba in power upon my arrival in Mossi country. It certainly would have facilitated my journey toward the Niger, and if he ever accedes to the throne, he will help with all the means at his disposal the European traveler who happens to pass through his country. This man has fine ideas; he loves progress, and will be well disposed to hear the counsel of the white man. Although his intelligence is higher than the average among blacks, he considers himself quite inferior to the European.[15]

Boukary Koutou further endeared himself to Binger by providing him with an escort so that he might reach the capital safely.

[643] In contrast, Binger was not impressed with Mogho Naba Sanum. He

lamented the fact that when Mogho Naba Koutou died in 1850, the youth- 175*
ful Boukary Koutou had not been able to defeat his brother in the struggle 177
for power. He voiced his disappointment with the town of Ouagadougou: 643●

> I expected to find something better than the ordinary royal residence in the Sudan, because everywhere I went people bragged to me about the riches of the chief and the number of his wives and eunuchs. I did not have to wait long to find out the true state of affairs, because that very evening I found that what was acknowledged as a palace and seraglio was nothing but a group of miserable huts surrounded by heaps of filth, and a group of straw huts which served as stables and lodgings for captives and *griots* [bards]. In the courtyard were cows, sheep, and donkeys, which had been brought that day as presents for the king, but which had not yet been presented to him.[16]

Binger did say that Sanum had treated him well and had allowed him to remain at Ouagadougou for over a month, but he was angered when the ruler refused to let him pass through Yatenga (which he claimed as part of his realm) to go to Timbuktu. Nor would Sanum consider his request
to place the Mossi under French protection. Finally, Sanum sent him a 175*
message ordering him to leave the capital immediately. Binger asked the 177
reason for this summary dismissal, and was informed that the Mogho Naba 643
believed that he was an advance guard for Europeans who were coming 648*
from the south, and that he did not show sufficient respect for the ruler. Binger scoffed at the first charge, but later found out that a German column under Von François was indeed heading for the Mossi. He violently rejected the charge of disrespect. He states:

> I feel that a white man traveling in this country, whoever he may be, should not prostrate himself before a black king, however powerful the latter may be. It is necessary that a white man should inspire respect and consideration wherever he goes; for if the Europeans should ever come here, they should come as masters, as the superior class of the society, and not have to bow their heads before indigenous chiefs to whom they are definitely superior in all respects.[17]

Despite these personal sentiments, Binger was compelled to leave Ouagadougou. He stopped briefly to visit his friend Boukary Koutou, and proceeded to the Gold Coast.

For some reason, Von François and his expedition never reached Mossi 175*
country. He left Togoland in February 1888 with a sizable force, intend- 648*
ing to establish German rule in the Niger bend area, but turned back at Surma on the Mossi border.[18] He was soon followed by numerous British missions from the Gold Coast, German missions from Togoland, and French missions from Dahomey and the Sudan. Marc states: "The three

*175 *648 European powers established in the vicinity realized that by controlling the markets of the Mossi, they could become masters of all the commercial routes in the interior near the bend of the Niger River."[19] The French pursued a more aggressive policy than any other power, dispatching mission after mission to the Mossi. In August 1890, Crozat was sent "to establish friendly relations between the French Sudan and the Mossi."[20] When he reached Ouagadougou in September, he found that Boukary Koutou had succeeded his brother and was reigning as Mogho Naba Wobogo.

Crozat, like Binger, was disappointed by the appearance of the Mossi capital, which he describes in the following words: "Like the smallest of Mossi hamlets, the capital is but a village surrounded by fields, and except for the absence of forest vegetation, nothing would indicate to the traveler that this is a great center and the home of the sovereign."[21] Most European travelers in the Sudan were disappointed by the capitals of African states. They could not reconcile the glowing reports of the Africans with their own ideas of royal splendor. Crozat was even more disappointed with Boukary Koutou. He states: *175 *648 ● 643

> The king of Ouagadougou is the same Boukary Naba who was Binger's cordial host at Banema; but what I was told about him and what I saw a little later were two different things, and the difference was to the ruler's disadvantage. Binger knew him as friendly, dignified, simple, somewhat opportunistic, and showing very little displeasure at his brother and predecessor who had exiled him from Ouagadougou. I found myself in the presence of a monarch very proud of his newly obtained but long-hoped-for dignity (Boukary, in effect, became king at Ouagadougou only because his brother died without male issue). Yet he was timid, shaky, and lived confined to his palace with his servants and wives, not daring to go out. He spent his time consulting holy men who had him under their control and who used up the resources of the realm to contrive the oddest and most expensive charms in order to allay the ruler's fear that he would be assassinated.[22] [789] [792]

Mogho Naba Wobogo did little to change Crozat's opinion of him. He hesitated to grant the Frenchman an interview because his councillors had advised against it. When Crozat was finally permitted to see the ruler, he told him:

> I was sent to you by the white chief who rules all the countries of the blacks from Bamako to Kayes, and from Fouta-Djallon to Kaarta. I have come in his name, and in the name of the ruler of all the French, to greet you and congratulate you on your ascension to the throne and to thank you for having received so well my countryman, the white man, who came to the Mossi two years ago. My superior has instructed me to remain with you for several days, so that you may have the opportunity to find out that whites will not harm you, and so that you may become our friend.[23]

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Wobogo thanked Crozat for coming to his country, and expressed his thanks to the chiefs who had sent him to Ouagadougou. But he refused to accept the gifts Crozat had proffered publicly. Crozat states, however, that the Mogho Naba sent a messenger to him explaining that he would accept the gifts if offered in secret, but could not accept them publicly because his ministers distrusted the Europeans. Crozat says that he complied with his host's wishes, and promised him more of "the kind of gifts that will be exchanged between two rich and powerful monarchs in mutual friendship."[24] Nevertheless, the Mossi ruler and his councillors showed by their behavior that they mistrusted the Frenchman. In trying to ascertain the nature of this mistrust, Crozat asked a servant of the king whether it was thought that Europeans would come to Mossi country if they felt that the Mogho Naba did not wish them to do so. The man replied that the monarch was being advised as follows: "The white men always act in the same way. . . . One of them always comes, and if he is well received, they come in large numbers; they establish themselves in the country; and where they establish themselves there are no more black rulers. It is they who rule."[25] The servant added that the Mogho Naba had replied that he was not afraid of the whites since his ancestors had all "died in bed." Crozat was reassured by the ruler's reply.

The Mogho Naba did not grant Crozat another audience, however, until he had stated his intention to leave Mossi country. Then Wobogo sent a messenger to tell him he could come to the palace and discuss any affair he wished before he left. Crozat appeared at court, and, acknowledging the strength of the opposition, attempted to counter its charges with feigned anger and guile:

> I do not have any affairs to discuss; for all that I had to say to you I said during the first meeting. I am not a merchant come here to sell, or to buy. I am a chief, as you can see from the attendants who escort me. I was sent to greet you in the name of the white men who are in the West, and to ask you to be our friend. If you wish to be our friend, that will be good for us, and our chief will be happy to have a great king like you as a friend. I think that such an agreement will be equally good for you. Our merchants will bring you the money and the goods you lack, and you will give us in return those things which you have in excess. Such are the relations that will be established between the Mossi and the French. Our ruler will often send you as gifts the wonderful things we make, and this exchange will make us both greater, richer, and stronger.
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> There may be some who are trying to prevent you from becoming our friend, saying that we are evil and bad. Those who speak like that are liars. Have you heard of any evil I have done, even to a child, since I came to the Mossi or during my trip? Have you heard of any maltreatment on our part

> *175 of those chiefs whom we like, in those countries on the other side of the Niger
> • 643 which have been given to us? Perhaps people will tell you again that every-
> *648 where we go, we change everything and wish to be the only masters. Have we changed something in Kenedougou, whose *fama* [chief] has been our friend for a long time? We have, it is true, deposed Ahmadou of Segou, but he waged war upon us, and Segou is not his. . . .

The Mogho Naba listened to Crozat in silence and later sent a servant to him with an equally diplomatic message:

> The Mogho Naba is very happy that you came, and thanks the chiefs who sent you; he wishes to declare his friendship with the white men who are in the West, especially with the French. He will see them with pleasure when they come again to the Mossi. They will be well received by us. . . . The chief declares his alliance and friendship with the French. . . . He will be pleased to see other Frenchmen come here, provided that they are not too numerous. As for your black traders and French merchants, they can come and trade with the Mossi in all security: he will not maltreat them.
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> On his part, the chief will send his people to trade in your possessions. As for you . . . you are now free to depart whenever you wish, and by whichever route you choose. The chief will give you four men to accompany you to the border.[26]

In his report to his superiors, Crozat suggests that the widespread belief in the Mossi immunity to attack by neighboring populations is based on imperfect knowledge of their actual strength and fighting ability. He questions the Mogho Naba's riches and power, declares that "he does not have an army," and concludes by stating that the commoners are exploited by their rulers and by the Moslem holy men and "would welcome the Europeans as rulers." He thus shows quite clearly that the Mossi were correct in viewing him as an enemy.[27] Marc, who had no reason to be hostile to Crozat, commented: "It seems to us that Crozat is somewhat unfair in his
[114] notes on the indigenous culture of the Mossi. It is possible that the total failure of his mission made him rather intolerant."[28]

Crozat was followed the next year by another French emissary, Lt.-Col. P. L. Monteil. The chief of Yako detained him briefly on the advice of a Moslem who had had unpleasant experiences with Europeans. When Monteil finally reached Ouagadougou and asked for an audience with the Mogho Naba, he was informed that the ruler would not see him and had given orders for him to be expelled from the country. Monteil had no recourse but to leave, but he made this observation: "One important result of this journey augurs well for the future. We were able to travel throughout Mossi country without difficulty."[29] He made a careful survey of the country which was used to good effect by his countrymen five years later.

of his prime minister, Rimsekedo, and the chiefs of the districts of Bere, 175*
Djiba, Manga, Nobere, and Rissouma led their armies to join the royal 648*
forces at a rallying point near the White Volta River. Meanwhile, Voulet 701
had expended most of his supplies in trying to bring Wobogo to terms. Having failed to do so, he tried to solve the problems of Mossi government by electing Wobogo's younger brother, Mazi, as ruler of Ouagadougou and emperor of the Mossi. Voulet then marched off to his base at Bandiagara by way of the White Volta, hoping to catch and defeat Wobogo's forces along the way. The monarch fled at Voulet's approach, so that when the forces of Rimsekedo and of the district chiefs arrived at the rendezvous, "they found only the droppings of Wobogo's horses," and angrily returned home. Naba Kaglere, chief of Nobere, was allegedly so infuriated by Wobogo's cowardice that he withdrew his support from his sovereign. However, the chiefs of Djiba and Rissouma remained faithful to their ruler, and the Dim of Mane attempted to intercept Voulet's advance toward Bandiagara, only to be defeated by the French, who burned his villages.

When Wobogo heard that the enemy had left the country, he ordered 175*
that the roof of his palace be restored, resumed his traditional duties such 648*
as appointing to office the heirs of district chiefs who had died during his [643]
absence, and prepared to return to the capital. In the interim Mazi had died (under suspicious circumstances, according to the French), thus leaving the people of Ouagadougou without a ruler and eager for Wobogo's return.[44] Unfortunately for the Mogho Naba, Voulet unexpectedly returned to Ouagadougou in December 1896, thus preventing Wobogo's return. Voulet, too, was in a predicament, for he had few allies among the Mossi, and Wobogo was firmly entrenched near Kombissiri in the south. To prevent many chiefs from coming to the aid of their sovereign, Voulet immediately launched an offensive against Wobogo. He burned several villages along the way, and received the allegiance of Wobogo's two brothers, Tarbega and Mahmadou, of two of his sons, and of two of his important vassals, the Mane Naba and the Boussouma Naba. But he failed to find the sovereign, who had fled to the region of Djiba and Nobere. Voulet then turned back to Ouagadougou, which he reached about a month later,
in January 1897. On the following day, the Ouidi Naba surrendered, and [645]
two days later the Tansoba followed suit. Voulet now formally deposed Mogho Naba Wobogo. A week later, he obtained the permission and cooperation of the traditional electors and placed Wobogo's brother Mahmadou on the throne as Mogho Naba Sighiri. This sovereign then "solemnly signed a treaty which placed his kingdom under the protection of France."[45]

*175 Voulet left Ouagadougou in February to establish French control
648 among the Gurunsi, leaving a military commander, Captain Scal, and a
Resident Officer at Ouagadougou. But he acted without taking into account
the resourcefulness of Wobogo (now once more Boukary Koutou), who
[645] had gained the allegiance of chiefs in the Manga area. The Gounga Naba,
[634] who was provincial minister for that region, tried to gain the support of the
Djiba and Rissouma districts for Mogho Naba Sighiri. He failed, and ordered
[669] the troops of Garanse, Nobere, Toise, and Yake districts to attack
Boukary Koutou's supporters. In the ensuing battle the Gounga Naba's
forces lost nine men, the rebels ten. The Gounga Naba considered these
losses too high and called off the fighting.[46]

*175 Meanwhile, Boukary Koutou had sent an appeal to Steward, the commander
*648 of a British force that was then on its march of conquest through
Gambaga and that had designs on Ouagadougou, "for protection in virtue
● 643 of the treaty concluded with Mr. Ferguson in 1894." Wishing to avoid conflict with the British, Voulet hastened to Tenkodogo in February 1897 to meet Steward, and the two men established boundaries between the French and British spheres of influence. Boukary Koutou was thus left to fend for himself.[47] Undaunted, he crossed the Gold Coast frontier once more and proceeded toward Ouagadougou. Scal heard about his activities and decided to launch an attack against him. He took Boukary Koutou by surprise in June 1897, and forced him to flee. Boukary passed through Bere district and arrived in the Gold Coast, where he was granted refuge by the British. About a year later, he convinced a Colonel Northcott that he had been unjustly deposed by the French, and that under the treaty of 1894 the British were his protectors and were obliged to restore him to his throne. In May 1898, a British force under Northcott and with Boukary Koutou in tow arrived at Kombissiri, some twenty-five miles from Ouagadougou, but here they were met by French emissaries who brought with them copies of the treaty of protection signed by Sighiri in January 1897. The British troops retreated, taking the dejected ruler with them into permanent exile.[48] Boukary reportedly settled at Zangoiri, a few miles from Gambaga.[49] He was forbidden to enter Gambaga because of the tradition that if he ever saw the Gambaga ruler, both of them would die. Boukary never returned to Mossi country. He died and was buried in the Gold Coast in 1904, but his funeral was held at Ouagadougou.[50]

Boukary Koutou is seen in retrospect as a tragic figure, whose main fault seems to have been that he ruled at the most difficult time in his
country's history. Judging by his treatment of Binger, he appears to have
[173] been a clever politician, but his resources were of no avail against the

superior might of the French. Like many other African groups, the Mossi 175*
have now evolved traditions to account for his fall and for the conquest 648*
of their country. They say that Wobogo lost his realm because he was a 643
cruel ruler. According to the Mossi, he executed the noble retainers of 173
Djiba in whose care his heir had died. But most important, the Mossi believe that Boukary was destined to lose his country to foreigners. According to one tradition, a holy man warned the ruler of Tenkodogo that an evil child who would bring harm to the country would be born into his house unless his birth was prevented by oblations to the ancestors. The Tenkodogo Naba made the necessary sacrifices, and the tragedy was averted. The holy man then went to Ouagadougou and gave the same warning to Mogho Naba Koutou. Koutou replied that he was the direct descendant of Ouedraogo and Oubri, and that no child of his could bring harm to the patrimony of the royal ancestors. He made no sacrifices, and a child who had "two teeth like the tusks of an elephant" was born into his house. This child, Boukary Koutou, was disrespectful of his father and made war against his brother, and was eventually defeated by the French.

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laborers.[3] In desperation, the French sought help from those very chiefs 177
whose power they wished to curb, especially from the Mogho Naba of 648*
Ouagadougou, whom they regarded as the supreme ruler of the Mossi. 643 ●
However, they met with the same resistance:

> The king of the Mossi, Kouka Naba [Mogho Naba Sighiri], is lavish with vows of devotion and fidelity, but these vows are never translated into action. It is impossible to obtain from him any pertinent information about the country—he tries to give the impression that he knows nothing about it—or any information about Boukary Koutou [then in exile, but still a threat to the French], of whom he pretends to have no news.[4]

One cannot tell whether the Mogho Naba knew about Boukary Koutou's activities, but it is highly unlikely that he could have given the French much information about the country even if he had wished to do so. No
Mogho Naba ever possessed this kind of information. The Dimdamba and [631]
the Kombemba paid allegiance and tribute to their superior ruler, but did [651]
not furnish him with specific data on their principalities and districts.

The death of Mogho Naba Sighiri in 1905 enabled the French officials 175*
to secure the election of a Mogho Naba they could control and to change 177
the Mossi political organization. Sighiri's principal heir was his sixteen- 643
year-old son, Saidou Congo, who in the opinion of the Mossi electoral 648*
college "could not keep the country" because of his youth. The French, keenly aware that they could more easily control a young ruler, insisted that Saidou be given the nam, and he became Mogho Naba Kom. Two years later, in 1907, the French began to reorganize the kingdom of Ouagadougou and the surrounding territories. They suppressed certain districts and principalities, enlarged some, and unified others by granting them control over the smaller political entities that lay near or within their boundaries. These changes were often made without regard for the traditional hierarchies, and many district chiefs found themselves controlling other district chiefs, while Dimdamba were reduced to the level of district chiefs.

The French also reorganized the provincial administration, replacing 175*
the five ministers with persons more favorably disposed toward their rule. 177
The Larhalle Naba was replaced in 1908 after he had mysteriously left the 648*
capital for Koudougou. The Kamsaogho Naba was deposed by the Mogho 645
Naba, and was replaced by a nominee of the French. As in the case of the district chiefs, the French shifted the territorial responsibilities of these ministers "without taking into consideration the hierarchy prevailing among [them]. The intention of the administration apparently was to reward certain young and capable ministers to the detriment of those who were old."[5] One commentator concludes: "In view of the youth of the

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175 What Mangin referred to euphemistically as "difficulties with the white
177 man" was, to the Mossi, rather drastic punishment for non-payment of
*648 taxes. If a man refused to pay his taxes, the Mossi chief was permitted to sequester his goods and sell them. If the man had neither the taxes nor the
651 goods, the chief had to send him and his wife (or wives) to the administrative post to be punished. Sometimes, a man and his wife would be made to look at the sun from sunrise to sunset while intoning the prayer *Ouennam co mam ligidi* ("God, give me money"). Other times, a man would be made to run around the administrative post with his wife on his back; if he had several wives, he had to take each one in turn. Then his wife or wives had to carry him around. The Mossi claim that a man had
[801] to run around the post three times, and his wife four. This is probably an exaggeration, however, because the numbers 3 and 4 are symbolically associated with men and women, respectively.
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175 A further source of difficulty for the Mossi chiefs, and one which be-
177 came more serious as time went by, was that they were charged by the
*648 administration to recruit men for both labor and military service. Initially, the chiefs had to supply men to transport grain for the French-organized
464 agricultural societies from one region to another; later, they were commanded to supply labor for private and public works. Labouret states:

> [776] The initial recruitment, which took place in 1912, was carried out without any difficulty, thanks to the unexpected afflux of volunteers. This was not the case in subsequent years. The reason for this was that the credulous natives of these distant regions, lacking any contact with the world, believed that the Europeans were carrying off their most robust youths to sell them to the Men of the Sea [mythical cannibalistic beings].[13]

[165] The Mossi were alarmed at the high rate of mortality among the young men who went away to work. They had a saying, *Nansara toumde di Mossi*
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175 ("White man's work eats [kills] people"), and resisted the recruiting attempts of their chiefs. There was, however, less opposition to recruit-
177 ment for military service, owing in part to the Mossi tradition of warfare.
*648 Many Mossi youths served in France during World War I, and additional hundreds served in an African contingent recruited "by an administrator named d'Arboussier, and with the cooperation of the Mogho Naba, to take possession of northern Togoland."[14]

The manner in which the Mossi chiefs administered their territories before the First World War was conditioned by the colonial administrators even when it was not directly controlled by them. The Mogho Naba had
● [643] gradually lost most of his power, and he had no authority to act without the specific authorization of the French. He retained most of his cere-

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monial activities, especially since they were considered interesting "feudal" 177
anachronisms to be shown to visiting officials and travelers. He also retained 648*
the power to appoint district chiefs, but the French often vetoed
men they disliked and suggested that other candidates be elected. He also 643
lost all control over his provincial administrators. The administrative
chain now extended from the cercle commanders, through the provincial
ministers and district chiefs, down to the village chiefs. Many provincial
ministers, out of loyalty to the traditional system, occasionally briefed the
Mogho Naba on the policies the French had ordered them to carry out,
and told him about the state of affairs in the districts. This was completely
unofficial if not illegal, but it made little difference to the French.

One serious blow to the power of the Mossi chiefs, especially on the 175*
district level, was their loss of judicial autonomy. Mossi country was subjected 177
to the Indigénat, a rather harsh code of law for new colonies, which 648*
was promulgated by a decree of September 1887. Under this code, administrators 692
could hold summary trials and punish any Moaga, whether chief
or commoner. In June 1905, the Mossi chiefs regained some of their judicial
power when a supplementary decree established village, district, and cercle
courts throughout Haut-Sénégal et Niger.[14] Mossi village chiefs regained [622]
their police powers and the right to reconcile disputes among their people, [625]
but their decisions could be appealed to a district court. The district chief
heard appeals and judged civil and criminal cases, but in all deliberations
he was aided by two assessors appointed by the Governor. His judgment [634]
could be appealed to a cercle court, which was presided over by a European,
who was assisted by two Africans. They heard appeals and judged crimes
for which the penalty could be no more than five years. Penalties handed
down by this court could be appealed to the Supreme Court of the Federation
of French West Africa in Dakar, which judged all major crimes.

Thus the Mossi chiefs did regain part of their judicial power; but because the decree of 1905 did not abolish the Indigénat, local French administrators could easily countermand this power. Moreover, some administrators, dissatisfied with the Mossi courts and possibly resentful at their own loss of judicial power, sent numerous complaints to Dakar about the incompetence of the chiefs and the injustices perpetrated by village and district courts. As a result, a decree of August 1912 abolished the judicial power of the Mossi and of all other African chiefs, and instructed them to refer all litigation to courts at the poste, subdivision, and cercle levels.[15]

During the period before the First World War, the Mossi chiefs lost 175*
not only their judicial power but also much of the economic and religious 177
basis of their political power. The French administration abolished slavery 648*

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*177 to cut down the length of service of our draftees as much as possible."[25]

648 The Governor of the Upper Volta made full use of the Mossi chiefs to develop the colony, and although some chiefs may have objected to the labor imposed on their subjects, others seemingly approved. In commenting upon cotton production in the Upper Volta, Ossendowski writes: *

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> Cotton is an artificial crop and one the value of which is not entirely clear to the natives. The chiefs with their superior intellect, seeing the profit to be obtained from the plantation of cotton, are continually enlarging the area of the fields, and resort to draft animals, ploughs, manures, and even partial irrigation of the fields; nevertheless, the great mass of the population submit rather unwillingly to those instructions of the administration which aim at the development of cotton cultivation in the colony.[26]

[631] Delavignette's comment on the role of the chiefs in cotton production seems to indicate that they, like their subjects, had to conform to the desires of the French:

> [464]
> [622]
> [465]
> [The French] lived at Ouagadougou in the shade of the great Nabas, and because [the latter] possessed servitors and were at the head of docile provinces; [the French] dignified by the name of "custom," and in any case adjudged convenient, this domestication of the peasants whereby they were forced to work in a common field under the authority of the village chief, and for a salary which was theoretically to be distributed among them afterwards. Sometimes cercle guards were stationed in these fields.[27]

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The Governor carried out many of Van Vollenhoven's reforms concerning the Mossi chiefs, and instructed his district administrators to respect the chiefs and to seek their aid in governing the people. De Beauminy, an administrator in the Upper Volta, contrasts the old policy with the new:

> ● [643]
> Not without reason, we followed the rule of regarding the great black chiefs as exploiters of their peoples, and this caused us to introduce and to maintain a policy aimed at reducing their authority. Later on we were compelled to abandon this policy in the face of discouraging results. During the past few years we have restored power and prestige to the Mogho Naba and to his vassals, the Mossi chiefs. They are now paid by us, and they administer their kingdoms and territories under our guidance and under the supervision of an extremely small European staff (one official for every 60,000 inhabitants). The rulers are now helping us to restore, on a newer and sounder basis, a political edifice which had once appeared to be on the point of collapse.[28]

An official report also stated that the Mossi chiefs

> understand that the time of their absolute power, and the privileges of their "medieval lordships," are fated to wear away gradually. Certainly, the main-

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28

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tenance of their authority and prestige is indispensable, and the local admin- 177
istration is firmly resolved not only to preserve it but even to strengthen it.
Henceforth, however, this authority and prestige will be upheld on the basis 648*
of principles and methods better suited to the new order of things which has 631
been established."[29]

The administration tried to educate some of the sons of the chiefs "in 175*
order to attune them to progress and to the fundamental principles of our 177
policy."[30] It encountered some resistance from chiefs who resented what 648*
they considered the "recruitment" of their children for education, and
from other chiefs who were afraid that, if educated, their sons might be 631
converted to Catholicism and thus would be unable to perform the traditional religio-political ceremonies. Nevertheless, one official states quite proudly that "Despite some resistance, the results obtained so far are encouraging and of such a nature as to allay our anxiety: 671 sons of chiefs are now attending our schools, among them 52 sons of provincial chiefs and 342 sons of district chiefs."[31] However, very few of these boys even learned French well enough to take part in the government of their society.

Hesling also made an effort to improve the material welfare of the Mossi 175*
chiefs. He felt that under the previous administration the chiefs had been 177
"inadequately remunerated," and he considered this bad for their morale. 648*
He therefore increased the appropriation for the salaries of chiefs from
86,000 francs in the 1919 budget to 190,000 francs in the 1924 budget, and 631
counted on their receiving an additional 163,260 francs from tax commis- 465
sions during the year. The Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou, considered the
emperor of the Mossi and judged loyal, efficient, and capable by the French, [643]
was granted a stipend of 25,000 francs, while the Yatenga Naba, considered his subordinate and judged less capable, was granted only 8,700 francs.[32] Only 276 chiefs out of a total of 497 in the territory received any stipend at all that year, because even an augmented budget was too small to provide funds for the lesser chiefs. These chiefs, in the words of one official, "were often inadequate or incapable, but . . . could not be replaced, either because they had no qualified successors or because the traditional system placed an obstacle in the way."[33] Instead of salaries, they received seeds of new plant species such as mangoes, and they were helped in building dams to irrigate their fields and in sinking deep wells near their compounds. In addition to these material rewards, the Governor increased the prestige of the chiefs by giving them medals and honors.

Despite these increased salaries and honors, and the more important 175*
role they now played in the administration of their subjects, the Mossi 177

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* 175 177 *648 631 ● 643 chiefs did not regain any of their traditional power. They remained auxiliaries of the administration. Taking Mogho Naba Kom as an example, one report states that this "simple, intelligent, compliant man served as news agent and made himself useful to the political administration" until the arrival of Hesling, when he took a livelier interest in the affairs of the colony.[34] Another source says of the same monarch:

> Free of the ancestral traditions that forbade him to leave his palace, and curious about progress and administration, he travels on all the roads and, under our supervision, busies himself with the settlement of administrative problems, to which he lends the weight of his authority. He makes the proposals for the nomination of province and district chiefs; he encourages his subjects to work and produce. Finally, he fulfills with the greatest dignity the representative functions that devolve upon him at his palace and in the official ceremonies.[35]

While it is true that the Mogho Naba made proposals for the nomination of chiefs, he was powerless to prevent their dismissal if they incurred the displeasure of the administration—a frequent occurrence during the Hesling period. For example, when the administration deposed Naba Boulga of Doulougou district for "incompetence" and placed him in "enforced residence" in a neighboring district, the French officials encouraged the election of Bila Kongo primarily because he was a former cercle guard. Bila Kongo was assassinated in 1924, and the Mogho Naba named Mahama Ouedraogo to take his place. This new chief soon had difficulties with the administration, however, and was deposed for exacting unauthorized taxes from his subjects and for abusing his authority. Mogho Naba Kom then appointed Ousmane Ouedraogo, but he was deposed for "incompetence" and exiled to Sao district.

* 175 177 *648 631 On the other hand, Hesling made few attempts to change the traditional political and administrative structures of the Mossi. One contemporary source says:

> Since its inception the Government of the Upper Volta has made no changes or innovations, or at best very few, in this connection. The native administrative entities in the cercles of Ouagadougou, Ouahigouya, Kaya, and Fada-N'Gourma have remained the same as those which Haut-Sénégal et Niger transferred to the colony in 1919. . . . Only in 1922 did the cercle of Koudougou have its "Gurunsi" districts separated from its "Mossi" districts to form a new province, which was placed under the command of the Leo Naba, a chief of the same Gurunsi race. [634] [635] Tenkodogo, a cercle made up of a large number of small districts ruled by thoroughly inept chiefs, has been the object of a partial internal reorganization since the beginning of 1923. The number of its native *circonscriptions* [districts] has been reduced from 82 to 73.[36]

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177 their younger sons to become Moslems, and soon abandoned their active
*648 resistance to Islam.

631 Hesling did not permit the Mossi chiefs to revive their traditional religio-
[795] political rituals and ceremonies such as the Tense, but he continued to toler-
[797] ate the Basgha. The French banned the Mossi market chiefs, because they believed (with some justification) that these officials used their offices to procure revenue for the chiefs. The difficulty was that the market chiefs were also responsible for arranging sacrifices to the market deities, which in the absence of such sacrifices would not protect the people from quarrels and violence in the market place. Some chiefs covertly retained their market chiefs; others obeyed the administration and remained anxious over the behavior of their subjects in the market. In general, however, most Mossi chiefs tried to adjust to the religious changes that were taking place, and sought to maintain at least surface amicability with all religious groups. Commenting upon the behavior of the Mogho Naba in this regard,
● [643] Dim Delobson states:

> The Mogho Naba, above all, is a believer in animism like all his subjects, and it is hard to understand how he manages to reconcile his fetishism with the complex dogmas of Islam and with the many interdictions of Christianity. However, the Mogho Naba is quite capable of being a Catholic or a Moslem on appropriate occasions, while at the same time respecting the traditions of his ancestors. Thus, when the Christians are celebrating Christmas, the emperor of the Mossi devoutly attends midnight Mass. Nevertheless, he wears his fez [really the bonnet which is the symbol of his office],
> [292] just as the bishop wears his miter. He likewise embraces Islam for the three Moslem festivals.[47]

*175 Hesling failed in his attempt to develop the Upper Volta as a viable
*648 colony, and many of the chiefs whom he had used as his auxiliaries lost
[631] not only a great deal of power but also a great deal of prestige in the eyes
[558] of their subjects because of the role they had played vis-à-vis the administration. By 1929 the economy of the Upper Volta was in poor condition:
[433] cotton production had declined; taxes (raised from 5,800,000 francs in
[651] 1921 to 18,274,000 francs in 1927 and scheduled to be raised to 26,400,000 francs in 1930) were unbearable; many of the roads that were too exten-
[491] sive, too little used, and too difficult to maintain had been abandoned; and
[167] more than 46,000 laborers who had worked in the cotton fields and on the roads had fled to the neighboring Gold Coast.[48] The Colonial Minister, Sarraut, ordered that the colony of the Upper Volta be dismembered. He states in his decree of September 1932 that the suppression of the Upper Volta "would permit appreciable savings, and would make the adminis-

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* 175 * 648 French Forces were present there. The official Vichy radio began broadcasts urging discipline, increased production, and "patriotic cooperation in making the Federation [of French West Africa] a military bastion against the encroachment of its British neighbors."[38] In response, local officials ordered Mossi chiefs to provide laborers to build trenches and fortifications between the two areas. The Free French, for their part, used the Gold Coast as a center for the distribution of anti-Pétain propaganda, and tried to employ returning Mossi labor migrants as couriers. The majority of these young men were not interested in politics, however, and those who were prevailed upon to take propaganda leaflets into Mossi country simply discarded them as soon as they crossed the border.

* 175 * 648 ● 643 The pressures, counter-pressures, and anxieties of this period were apparently too much for Mogho Naba Kom II, who died on March 12, 1942. By the next morning, countless rumors to the effect that the Mogho Naba had committed suicide had spread as far as the Gold Coast. The most widespread rumor was that the Mogho Naba's anti-Pétainist views had become clear to the administration. In reprisal, he was "placed under surveillance on Boisson's orders and separated from his subjects. He died solemnly by his own hand after having summoned his son and commanded him not to take office 'until the true French should return.'"[39] Another widely circulated rumor, probably originated by Moslems, was that the Catholic missionaries, freed from the restraints of Paris, had tried to compel the Mogho Naba to divorce his many wives and become monogamous. The Mogho Naba allegedly could not comply with this demand because it would have been a severe violation of Mossi tradition for a royal wife to become the wife of any other man while her husband was still alive. Faced with this dilemma, the rumor said, the Mogho Naba committed suicide.

The official French report on the Mogho Naba's death reveals that the administration was aware of these and other rumors and of their potential influence on the behavior of the Mossi people. The report also shows that the French officials believed, and credited the Mossi with believing, the classical superstition that "The heavens themselves blaze forth the death of princes." The report states:

> Over the last few years, the health of Saidou Congo [Mogho Naba Kom II] has been impaired by heart trouble, and it was a heart attack which carried him off at about 11 P.M. on March 12th.
>
> [761] [821] [763] The natives have no explanation for sudden deaths, and attribute them either to supernatural intervention or to poison. Besides, two phenomena had occurred just then to strike the imagination: there had been a total eclipse of the moon on the night of March 2d to 3d, which announced,

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> according to the Mossi, the imminent death of an important chief; secondly, 648*
> a meteor had passed unexpectedly over Ouagadougou between 8 and 9 P.M. 643
> [on March 12th], vividly impressing the Mogho Naba himself. [821]
>
> It is quite possible that the emotions induced by these phenomena aggra- [763]
> vated the heart condition that felled him. Certain people have maintained that the Mogho Naba, being opposed to all foreign domination and convinced that serious developments were imminent, voluntarily commited suicide by poison in order to elude them. So far, there is no proof that such a rumor has really been adrift. The matter is under strict investigation.[60]

The Mossi people practiced as best they could the traditional rituals connected with the death of a Mogho Naba. During the interregnum, however, the administration did not permit the usual chaos, ritual or otherwise. One administration report states: "Young people tried to steal things in the market, taking advantage of the old customs, but they were checked."[61] A later report adds that the traditions of the Napoko and the Kourita were honored, and that one hundred persons were arrested for the ritual larceny of small objects.

The traditional Mossi authorities allegedly requested that the deceased Mogho Naba, as one who had worn the Legion of Honor, be given full military honors. This required the placing of his body in a coffin so that [766]
the funeral cortege could move through the streets, a fact which introduced [177]
a new ritual element in royal funerals. Once this ceremony was over, however, the representatives of the administration withdrew, and the body was buried according to customary rites.

The traditional electoral college then proceeded with the task of choos- [666]
ing a new ruler. The choice was between Issoufou Congo, Kom's eldest son, who was then a lieutenant in the French Colonial Army in the Ivory Coast, and his younger brother, Etienne Congo, chief of the Doulougou district. With the administration's permission, the college elected Issoufou Congo. He took the title "Sagha" (the second Mogho Naba to bear that name), and was installed with traditional ceremonies.

The message Sagha sent to the French High Commissioner bears quot- 175*
ing. Like the traditional speeches of newly elected Mogho Nanamse, it 648*
was believed by the Mossi people to contain subtle jibes at enemies, praises 643
to benefactors and friends, and portents of future plans. The Mogho Naba 537
said:

> At the moment when I take command of the Mossi people, I must thank you for having placed me on the throne of my father. I give you assurance of my fidelity toward France in all circumstances. Be assured by this testimony that my father will remain for me an honored person and a guide. I will walk in the footsteps of my father. In these difficult times, my people and I re-

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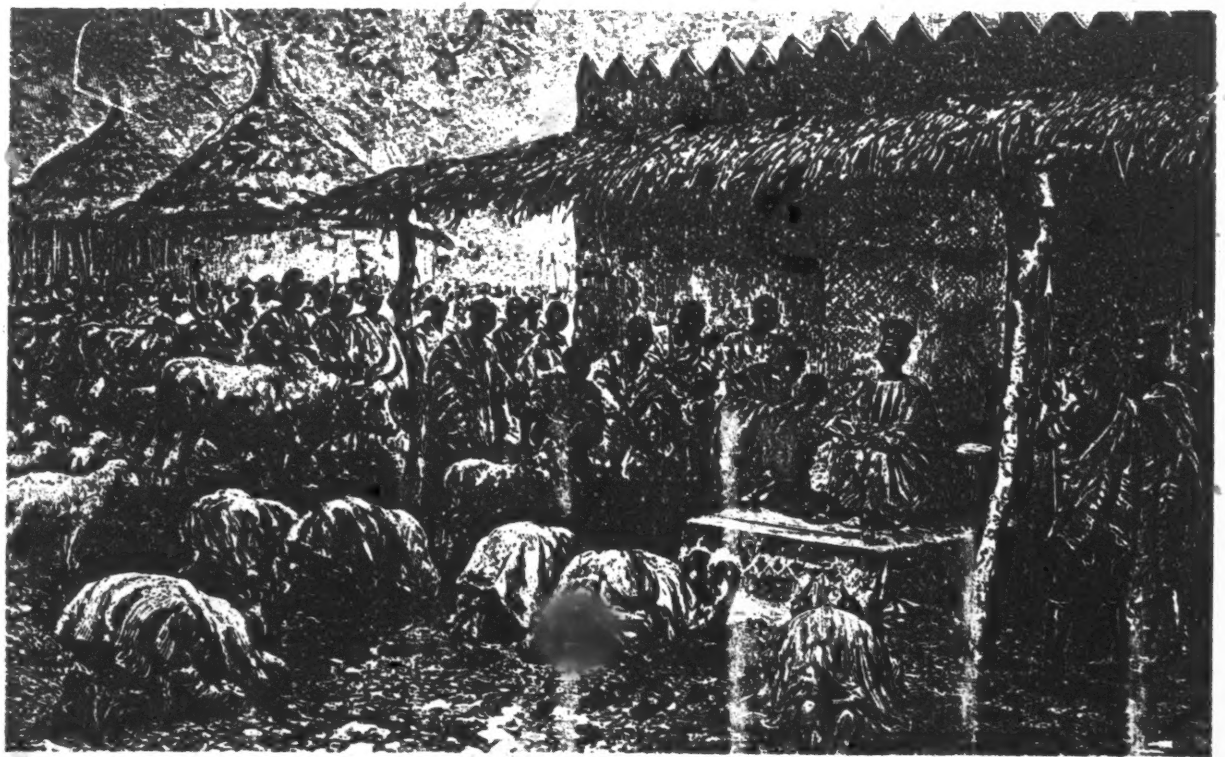
175 *648 ● 643 main attached to the French cause. My father is dead, but the soul of Mossi country lives on. I beg you to transmit to Marshal Pétain, Admiral Platon, Governor-General Boisson, and Governor Deschamps the expression of my profound attachment to France and the assurance of my full devotion.[88]

[537] Some contemporary Mossi claim to see the Mogho Naba's appreciation of General de Gaulle, his rejection of the Pétain regime, and his desire to regain power over the Mossi people, in the words, "I will walk in the footsteps of my father. In these difficult times, my people and I remain attached to the French cause. My father is dead, but the soul of Mossi country lives on." No one could be sure that this was indeed the Mogho Naba's true sentiment, but this too is according to custom.

* 175 *648 Nine months after Issoufou became Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou, the situation in French West Africa changed radically. The Allied forces invaded North Africa, and, after more than two years of resistance, Governor-General Boisson shifted West African support to the Free French. Forced labor and product requisitions continued, but now the Mogho Naba and his chiefs were told that the aim was to help General de Gaulle. M. Cournarie, who had replaced Boisson as Governor-General in 1943, made no significant changes either in the administration of Mossi country or in its traditional political organization. Nevertheless, the pressures for fundamental changes in European colonial territories were steadily building up throughout the colonial world. De Gaulle, with the foresight he was to show time and again, realized that the prewar colonial system was dead. He attempted to set the stage for the progress of the African peoples by calling a conference of high French colonial officials at Brazzaville in the Moyen-Congo, to open in January 1944. This conference was to effect great changes throughout French Africa and to set the stage for an irrevocable change in the position of the Mossi chiefs.

[p. 178 - A]



Visitors to the court of Mogho Naba Sanum salute him in the traditional Mossi manner.
From Louis Binger, *Du Niger au Golfe de Guinée par le pays Kong et le Mossi,* 1887–1889 (Paris, 1892).

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[p. 178-8]

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Mogho Naba Sagha II (1942–57), who was instrumental in reuniting the Mossi people into one territory, the Upper Volta.

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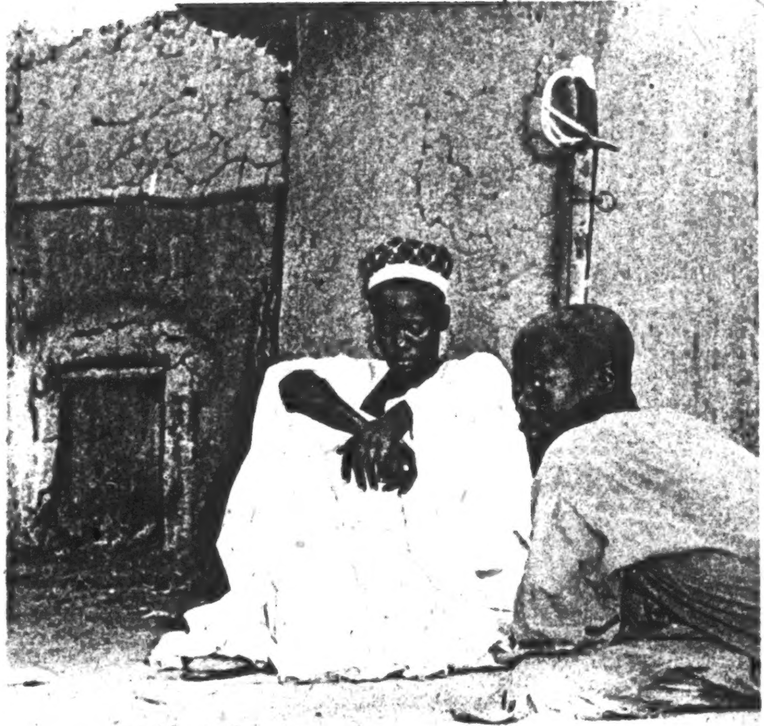

The Mogho Naba's daughter, the Napoko, impersonates her deceased father at his funeral ceremonies. Note that she wears one of his robes, his slippers, and his bonnet, and has his sword behind her.

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28

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[p. 178-D]

(*Left*) Mogho Naba Kougri and Ouezzain Coulibaly, who became Vice President of the Government Council of the Upper Volta in 1957. (*Center*) Maurice Yaméogo, President of the Republic of Upper Volta. (*Right*) Mogho Naba Kougri (1957-) on his ceremonial horse at his installation.

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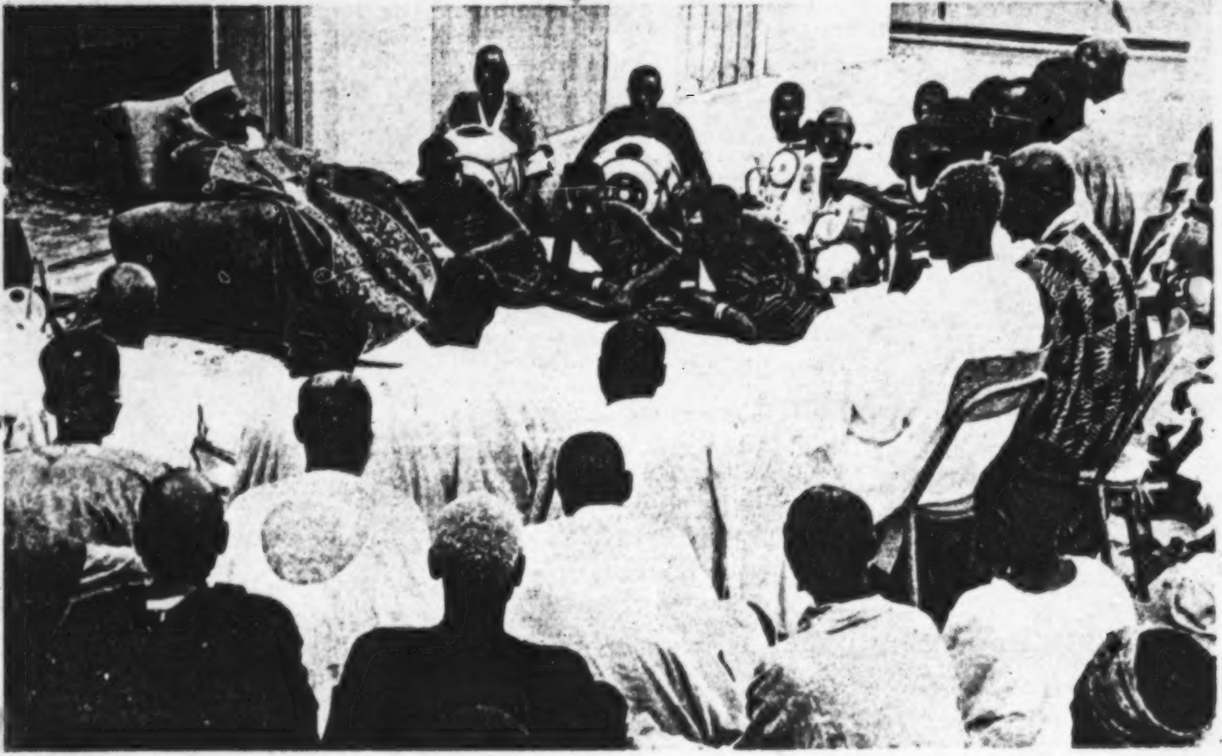
[p. 171-E]



Mogho Naba Kougri at court. He is flanked on the right by his pages and musicians, and on the left by members of the Moslem community.

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
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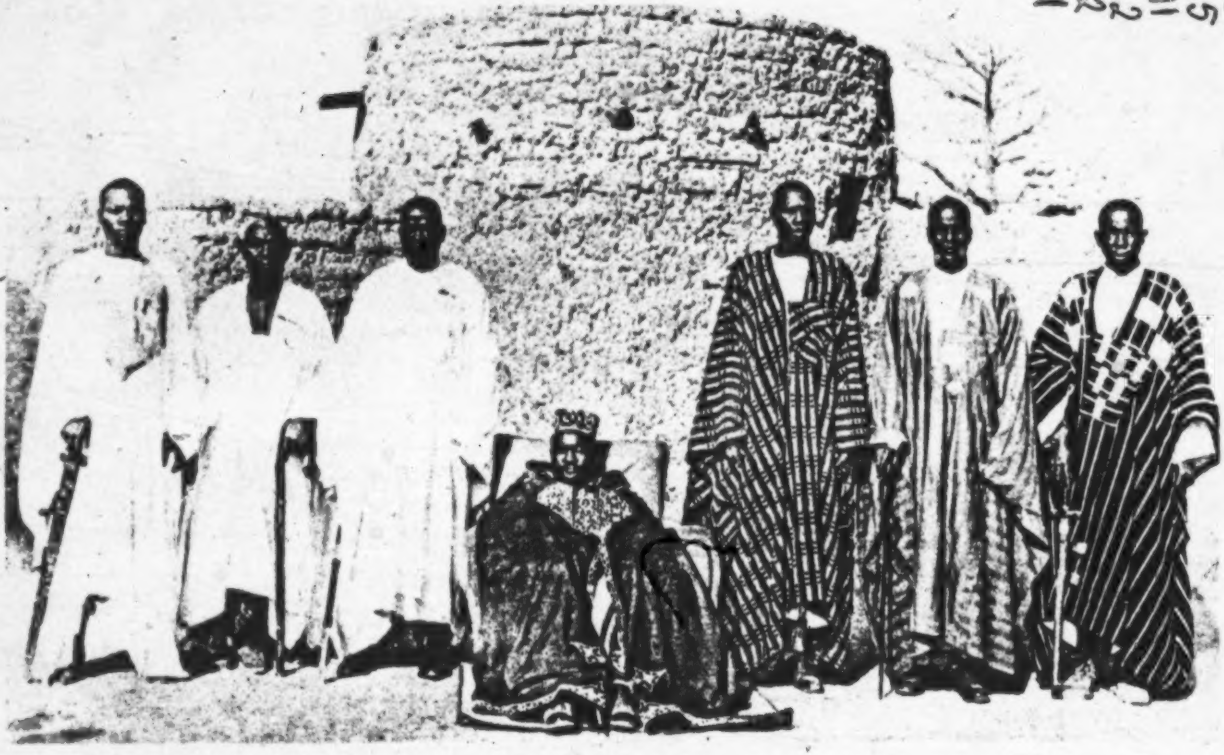

Mogho Naba Kougri (*center*) and, from left, the Kambo Naba, the Gounga Naba, the Ouidi Naba, the Larhalle Naba, the Baloum Naba, and the Nemdo Naba.

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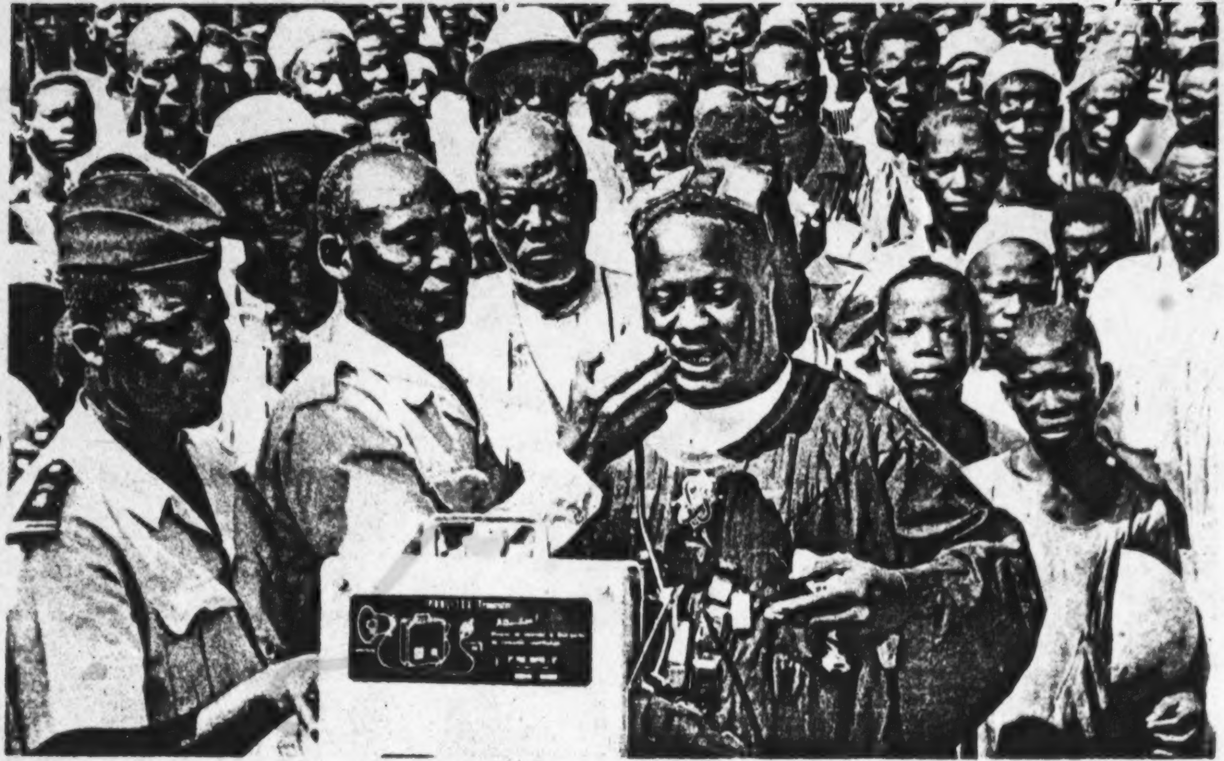

Mogho Naba Kougri concedes to the administration, and orders his warriors to disband.

[p 178-H]

[P.179]

[post world war II period]

XI

CHIEFS AND POLITICIANS

THE MOSSI CHIEFS were neither present nor represented at the Brazzaville 175* Conference, and thus had no voice in the discussions about the postwar po- 666 litical structure of the territories and their place in this structure. The dele- 631 gates laid the groundwork for the governmental structure, but failed to define the role of the chiefs.[1] Thus, when the first postwar elections were held in August 1945 to select municipal officers (the first elections held in French West Africa outside of Senegal), none of the African chiefs had a role aside from their unofficial influence on their subjects.[2] The Mossi who were in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, and who were qualified to vote took part in the election, but the Mossi in Mogho could not vote because their towns had not yet been granted municipal status.

The first election in which the Mossi and their chiefs voted was the one 175* held in October 1945 to elect delegates from the Ivory Coast (Ouagadougou 666 was then considered the Upper Ivory Coast) to the Constituent Assembly 648* in Paris, which was to establish the Fourth French Republic. Félix Houphouët-Boigny, a Baulé chief, planter, and founder of the African Agricultural Union (Syndicat Agricole Africain), had won the municipal elections in Abidjan, and now sought the support of the Abidjan Mossi for his candidacy to the Assembly. The Mossi spokesman in Abidjan, Zebango Pohi, stated that the Mossi would vote only for a Voltaic, and that the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou (who because of his father's reputation and his own educational qualifications was now acknowledged as the spokesman for all Mossi chiefs) would decide whom the Mossi would support.[3] Hou- [643] ● phouët-Boigny then sought the support of the Mogho Naba, but the ruler was committed to a policy of detaching Mossi country from the Ivory Coast and named one of his own traditional ministers, the Baloum Naba. Houphouët-Boigny and his supporters were reportedly "greatly surprised by the Mogho Naba's choice. They felt that the honest but illiterate Baloum Naba was unqualified for the task, and, moreover, could not hope to gain the sup-

[post-world war I period]

* 175 * 648 666 port of the coastal Ivory Coast population. There was little they could do about it, however, because 'the decision of the Mogho Naba was irrevocable.' "[4]

● [643] * 175 666 665 The election was hotly contested. The candidates based their campaigns on local issues: taxes, forced labor, the lack of public services, the status of the traditional chiefs, colonialism, racial discrimination, and so on. The Parti Démocratique de la Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI), led by Houphouët-Boigny, stressed the need for combating racial discrimination and exploitation by European planters. The Union pour la Défense des Interêts de la Haute-Volta (UDIHV), formed by the Mogho Naba and a group of mission-educated young men and led by the Baloum Naba, stressed the need to end forced labor, especially among the Mossi, and to place all the Mossi under one territorial government. The UDIHV realized that it had little chance of gaining votes in the south, and therefore concentrated its efforts in the north. However, no credence is to be given to the story that "Whenever [the Baloum Naba] was free from [official] supervision, he told the people, 'Vote for my friend Houphouët. . . . What would I do in Paris, with my forty wives and at my age? I can't speak a blasted word of French.' "[5] Houphouët-Boigny won the election by the surprisingly narrow margin of 12,650 to 11,620.[6]

* 175 * 648 668 [646] [177] Houphouët-Boigny played a leading role in persuading the first Constituent Assembly to submit to the voters a number of important liberal colonial reforms. These included the abolition of the Indigénat; the freedom of meeting and association; the bestowal of French citizenship on colonial peoples without affecting their traditional personal status; the use of the French Penal Code in all courts dealing with criminal cases; and the abolition of forced labor.[7]

* 175 631 646 177 There was some discussion in the Assembly of what role the traditional chiefs should play in the projected political structure of Overseas France. One group of delegates held that "the structure of the local Assemblies should be tied intimately to the existing structure of the overseas societies. Otherwise, they would be bogus Assemblies whose decisions would serve the interests of only one class in the society, the dominant class."[8] These men felt that while many chiefs were conservatives and might incline to "neo-feudalism," the new elite of young educated Africans who aspired to replace the Europeans were, for the most part, European-trained and out of contact with the rural masses. These delegates believed that only the chiefs could provide adequate popular leadership, and that the French Union could not cohere or develop unless the chiefs had some status vis-à-vis the elite and prestige in the eyes of the people.[9]

[post-World War II period]

Another group held that the chiefs need not be formally associated with 175*
the governmental apparatus. A historical precedent was cited: in the early 631
days of colonialism, the chiefs had not become civil servants, and their status 648*
had not been impaired. Thus, when a chief collected taxes for the administration,
his action was comparable to his former collection of tribute; when [182]
he recruited forced labor for the administration and the large plantations,
it was similar to the traditional corvée; and when he asked people to plant
certain crops, it was like asking them to cultivate his own fields. In a word,
as the institution of chieftainship had adjusted to past changes in African
societies, so it had the capacity to adjust in the future.[10]

Other delegates, and apparently the French administrators as well, felt that the chiefs should be associated with the administration, but as administrative assistants and not as elected representatives of the masses.[11] Since the position of the chiefs was sacred as well as secular, it was argued, political defeat might impair their position as "the fathers of their people."[12]

The constitution drafted by the first Constituent Assembly (lacking any 175*
provisions concerning the traditional chiefs) was finally submitted to the
voters in May 1946. Although it won a majority of overseas votes, it was 648*
defeated by the French people. The subsequently convened second Constituent 642
Assembly was subjected to a great deal of pressure by a group of 666
colonialists called Etats Généraux de Colonisation, and as a result many of
the provisions of the first constitution, among them the single-college provision
and various rights of citizenship, were not included in the second. The
revised constitution was accepted by the French voters in October 1946.[13]
By this time, however, many of the African delegates had become so disillusioned 175*
with the French parliamentarians in the National Assembly that
they decided to fend for themselves. They met in Bamako in the French 648*
Sudan and formed an inter-territorial grouping called the Rassemblement 668
Démocratique Africain (RDA), led by Houphouët-Boigny. Houphouët-Boigny
was strongly anti-imperialist, and the party received the active
support of the French Communists. It adopted a violently anti-colonial
platform, pledging to rally the peoples of Africa to a world-wide struggle
against colonial imperialism, and to try to bring all of the emerging political
parties in French Africa under its banner in order to achieve the
"emancipation of the African masses."[14] 175*

The Mogho Naba and the other Mossi chiefs, noting the anti-colonial 648*
posture of the RDA and the hostile reaction of the colonial regime to this 642
group, attempted to take advantage of the situation by advocating the re- 643
integration of the Upper Volta under their more conservative auspices. The
Mogho Naba had already taken advantage of the Bastille Day celebration 631

[post-World War II period]

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*648 in 1946 to visit and consult with the Yatenga Naba about Mossi reunifica-
tion, thus ending a centuries-old tradition whereby the two rulers could not
642 meet for fear of death inflicted by the ancestors. Their project was now re-
●643 ceived with greater interest by the local Europeans, both *colons* and admin-
631 istrators, who were alarmed by Houphouët-Boigny's radicalism and bent
[668] on preventing the spread of virulent anti-colonialism among the well-disciplined Voltaic populations.

*175 Shortly after the constitution was approved, the administration an-
nounced that elections would be held on December 15 for the Second Col-
642 lege of the Ivory Coast's General Council or Territorial Assembly (to be
668 composed of Africans and persons without full French citizenship) and for
665 the other organs of the French Union. Once again Houphouët-Boigny and the RDA, having gained the support of the PDCI and the Parti Progressiste de la Côte d'Ivoire (PPCI), tried to obtain the backing of the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou and the Mossi-supported UDIHV (shortly to become the Union Voltaïque).[15] Again the Mogho Naba refused. Gabriel D'Arboussier, one of Houphouët-Boigny's lieutenants and an important official of the RDA, later charged that the ruler had been influenced by the Minister of Overseas France, Coste-Floret, who told him that the RDA "was no more democratic than it was African, that it was not an Assembly, and that Africans should rally to an institution that was truly African."[16] In any event, the Mogho Naba and the UDIHV decided to oppose the RDA. They emphasized the common interests of the Upper Volta and championed Voltaic candidates, Mossi and non-Mossi alike.

*175 The electoral law of the territories promulgated in October 1946 did not
666 specifically discriminate against the chiefs, but it was heavily weighted in
631 favor of the educated and urban elite. The electorate was confined to civil servants; soldiers and veterans of the armed forces; chiefs; permanent employees of commercial, industrial, craft, or agricultural establishments; members and former members, for at least two years, of cooperatives, trade unions, and committees of provident societies; holders of official decorations; members of prewar courts and councils including the Chambers of Commerce, Agriculture, and Industry, and agricultural unions; Christian priests and ministers; owners of registered real property; holders of driving or shooting licenses; and persons literate in French or Arabic. Candidates for election to the Territorial Assemblies had to be at least twenty-three years of age, to be registered on the electoral list as residents of the territory, to have a good knowledge of French, and to post a bond of 5,000 CFA (Colonies Françaises d'Afrique) francs, which was forfeited if the candidate received less than 5 per cent of the votes in his election district. Many chiefs were eligible to vote, but, because their fathers had opposed their be-

[post-world war II period]

175*

ing educated at mission-sponsored schools, few were qualified to run for 666
office.[17] 631

More serious for the position of the Mossi chiefs, perhaps, was the fact that many of them either were ill informed about the election or refused to take it seriously. Balima states that a surprisingly large number of Mossi chiefs "could not understand very well the importance of this novelty—which is understandable; had no interest in the formalities, which they nevertheless carried out; and somewhat haphazardly designated as candidates African civil servants to whom they were not even tied by close bonds of friendship."[18] Of course, another reason for this choice of "African civil servants" was that they were among the only persons with the training and education required for candidacy. Nevertheless, the candidates included a few educated members of chiefly families—persons who, not being in the main line of descent or being otherwise ineligible for office in the traditional system, had been "given" to the Europeans to be educated.

The partisans of the Mossi chiefs were victorious in the northern part of the Ivory Coast in an election that saw the emergence of such Voltaic politicians of later fame as Blaise Benon, François Bouda, Zindà Kaboré, Christophe Kalenzaga, Tindougou Ouédraogo, Zebango Pohi, and Maurice Yaméogo. However, the Second College was dominated by Houphouët-
Boigny and his RDA colleagues. Despite the Mogho Naba's opposition, 175*
RDA delegates set out to ameliorate conditions in the Volta region. For 643 ●
example, the RDA secured the passage of bills to raise the Mogho Naba's 668
salary from 60,000 francs a year, a trifling sum in view of his official and
private expenses, to about 500,000 francs a year. Similarly, it ensured that [465]
Mossi and other Voltaic students would receive a fair share of the scholarships which France had assigned to colonial students.[19]

These gestures did not dampen the ardor of the Mossi chiefs for the re- 175*
integration of the Upper Volta. In April 1947, when French President 648*
Auriol, touring the territories to observe the operation of the new political 642
institutions, visited the Upper Volta, the Yatenga Naba, the Tenkodogo
Naba, and the head ruler of Fada-N'Gourma met the presidential party at [631]
Ouagadougou and pressed their claim for separate territorial status. The French reportedly welcomed this petition because it gave them an opportunity to clip the wings of Houphouët-Boigny, as well as to ensure the aid of the chiefs in procuring adequate manpower for a projected extension of the Abidjan–Bobo-Dioulasso railroad to Ouagadougou. The problem was to convince the National Assembly in Paris that the reunification of the Upper Volta was in the best interests of all concerned.

The French government set up a Parliamentary Commission and sent its chairman, Jean Jacques Duglas, to Ouagadougou and other Voltaic re-

[post-world war II period]

* 175 648 642 gions to ascertain whether the people desired reunification. Duglas reported his findings to the National Assembly:

> You know as well as I do that the Mossi are proud of their past. Thanks to a political and social organization without peer in West Africa, they have known peace since the Middle Ages, in an Africa ravaged by war and depopulated by the slave trade. . . . This ancient land also desires prosperity and modernization. To achieve this its voice must be heard, not only in the National Assembly but particularly in the Grand Council [the highest consultative body] of French West Africa. The Upper Volta must have its own General Council.[20]

*175 *648 The law authorizing the reconstitution of the Upper Volta as a separate territory was promulgated on September 4, 1947. The non-Mossi populations of the projected territory feared Mossi domination and voiced their opposition in the Assembly, but in the end an accord was reached. The Mossi chiefs next petitioned the French government to pay for the rebuilding and refurbishing of Ouagadougou. François Bouda, one of the few traditional Mossi nakomce to become an elected representative of the Mossi, reminded the members of the Council of the French Union of what had occurred in 1919. He stated that his own father had recruited thousands of men to make bricks for "Bancoville" (an epithet for Ouagadougou; most of its buildings were of sun-dried bricks called *banco*) because Governor [464] Hesling "never considered the possibility of purchasing cement, which was not even expensive. Forced labor was easy to recruit, and no one thought that the day would come when it would be gone."[21] Bouda said that the Government should now help the new territory to modernize the capital.

D'Arboussier, an RDA delegate in the Assembly, declared that he would support the bill, if only because in the past the French government had attempted "to make a crack race horse out of an ordinary horse, and in so doing had made it a decrepit mare."[22] Funds for rebuilding Ouagadougou were finally voted, and the "Bancoville" of French West Africa began to take on a new look with wide avenues, large administrative buildings, official residences, and even a new palace for the Mogho Naba.

*175 643 631 554 *648 With the reconstitution of the Upper Volta, the Mogho Naba and his chiefs attained their highest prestige since the conquest. The chiefs even had strong influence over the Mossi representatives to the organs of the French Union, because of the decisive support they had granted them in the elections. But this increase in prestige was to be short-lived. The chiefs were no longer the sole representatives of their people, and the Mossi were no longer isolated from events in other parts of the Upper Volta, or for that

[post-world war II period]

175*

matter from events in French West Africa and the rest of Overseas France. 643
All projects undertaken in the Upper Volta became of interest to the other 631
units of the French Union because the funds to support them had to be 554
voted on by representatives of the whole, including not only local Mossi 648*
and non-Mossi, but also Africans in other territories, French colonial populations outside Africa, and the metropolitan French.

The conditions that were to have the greatest effect on the position of 175*
Mossi chiefs were created in January 1949, when elections were held to
choose the Upper Volta's first General Council. The major parties involved 631
in the election were the Mossi-dominated Union Voltaïque; the Entente 666
Voltaïque, a local section of the RDA representing the interests of such 665
non-Mossi populations as the Lobi, Fulani, Bobo, Senufo, and Gurunsi; [646]
and a group of smaller ethnic parties such as the Union Lobie and the Indépendants. The campaign reflected all the tensions and conflicts prevalent among the administration, the RDA, the non-Mossi parties, and the Union Voltaïque. Both the Union Lobie and the Indépendants spoke out against what they feared to be Mossi domination, and accused the Mossi chiefs of "neo-feudalism." The Union Voltaïque accused the RDA of radicalism, of associating with communists, and of hostility to the chiefs. It cited as evidence the deposal of several Agni and Senufo chiefs in the Ivory Coast by partisans of the RDA. The RDA, in turn, charged the Union Voltaïque with supporting reactionary, feudal-minded chiefs, and thus with opposing the true interests of the Mossi and other Voltaic peoples. Furthermore, it accused Masson (Governor Mouragues's executive officer) of encouraging the cercle commanders to fight against the RDA, and of jailing about 300 RDA members at Bobo-Dioulasso.[28]

As expected, the Union Voltaïque won most of the seats in the more populous Mossi section of the Upper Volta, and thus was able to dominate the political institutions created by the administration. Nevertheless, the election produced deep political scars in the Upper Volta, and lasting enmity between the RDA and the Mossi chiefs.

During the years that followed the reunification of the Upper Volta, the 175*
Mossi chiefs as such were not accorded any specific status by the administra- 648*
tion. Beginning in 1953, bills designed to regularize the status of the chiefs 631
were submitted by Mossi delegates to the Assembly of the French Union
and to various other organs of the French Union, but to no effect. The [646]
Mossi chiefs meanwhile sought to define their own position. In 1952, under 175*
the leadership of the Mogho Naba, they formed an organization called the
Union of the Traditional Chiefs of the Upper Volta. Article IV of the stat- 631
utes which they filed with the territorial administration reads as follows: 647
[643]

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964

FA28 Mossi FA28

[post-world war II period]

ity in local matters, even though the Indigénat had been abolished. They 175* 631
adjudicated minor offenses committed in their territories or referred to 647
them on appeal by the districts and villages. They attempted to settle family
quarrels and commercial cases, and ordered that restitution be made in cases [692]
of theft. However, they had to send any difficult case or major crime up the
hierarchy until it reached the officials authorized to deal with it.

The French administrators also continued to act as intermediaries be- [648]*
tween the large commercial enterprises in Ouagadougou who wished to
recruit men for labor or to buy local produce and enterprises in the larger
Mossi towns. Thus, if a private firm in Ouagadougou wanted men to work [464]
on the roads, it asked the *chef de poste* (administrator) of a region to tell
the district chiefs that its representatives would come to recruit men on a
certain date. If a large business was planning to canvass a certain area in
order to buy shea nuts, it asked the local administrators to notify the chiefs.
No one was ever quite certain whether these activities were legal, but no
one questioned them. The *chefs de poste* might simply have been giving
the people information that they could not have obtained by any other
means.

The Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou, like the supreme chiefs of the other 175*
Mossi regions, continued to perform both the administrative role assigned 648*
to him by the colonial government and his traditional politico-ceremonial 643
role. He was partly responsible, through his active cooperation with the
administration, for the rapidity with which the Upper Volta became a functioning entity. For example, in his anxiety to make his capital worthy of being the territory's administrative center, he gave his full support to the extension of the Abidjan–Bobo-Dioulasso railroad to Ouagadougou. But he always succeeded in giving the impression (to foreigners at least) of detachment and dissociation from the French administration. His behavior was quite different when he functioned as Mogho Naba of the Ouagadougou Mossi. The following is a brief description of a visit he made to one of the districts:

> 175*
> The Mogho Naba arrived unexpectedly at the district chief's headquarters, 643
> where no preparations had been made for his visit. It appears that he was 634
> on a tour of his domains to consult with the local chiefs about the forthcom- 574
> ing elections, and had simply dropped in to visit the district chief. However,
> as soon as his presence became known around the district, important village 182
> chiefs and the heads of lineages all put on their robes and appeared to pay homage to him. Meanwhile, he was consulting with his host. But as soon as the conversation was over he came out into the compound, where he was saluted by the chief's Bendere, who praised the royal ancestors by reciting

[post-world war II period]

175 their genealogies and traditions. The Mogho Naba was pleased by the reci-
● 643 tation and thanked the drummer.

634 Later that day, the Mogho Naba presented himself in the courtyard of
the district chief's compound to be saluted by the village chiefs and by the
574 heads of lineages. They came to him in the traditional way, rubbing their
182 palms and bending their foreheads to the ground. He addressed them, and in response they snapped their fingers in the customary manner. Then, one by one, the village chiefs and the lineage elders came to their monarch and gave him presents of money which ranged from 50 to 200 francs. The Mogho Naba paid little attention to the sums given, being more interested in this act of homage and fealty. However, he listened carefully as each donor announced his name and rank within the official hierarchy or village. He later thanked them collectively and departed. This ceremony, while not very elaborate, differed little in detail from those characteristic of the traditional Mossi's relationship to their Mogho Naba. The new element here was that the monarch was traveling around his domain, establishing a close relationship with his chiefs and subjects, whose support he needed for his modern political alliances.[28]

*175
643 The Mogho Naba continued to hold the morning ceremony at court,
796 even though it was rapidly losing its traditional function and becoming of
182 major interest only to visitors. He also continued to hold those ceremonies associated with individual appointments to the nam and with traditional
[692] sacrifices. Unknown to many was the fact that traditional authorities at court still judged legal cases which many Mossi refused to take to the Europeans.

*175 In contrast to the Mogho Naba, the traditional provincial ministers now
645 lost most of the power they had held in the pre-conquest period, and all the duties they had acquired in the immediate post-conquest era. As we have
182 seen, one minister, the Baloum Naba, had entered politics at the suggestion of the Mogho Naba, but even he was now relegated to the entourage that accompanied the Mogho Naba and the European administrators on visits to the ministers' former provinces. The increased number of European administrators had made these ministers superfluous.

178 The district chiefs retained some prestige after the war. They could still
*175 judge legal cases, with the understanding that the litigants were free to go
554 to the Europeans if they so desired and had to be sent there in serious cases.
634 Their major problem was that a more efficient administration was taking
[692] a greater interest in district affairs. For the first time since the conquest, officials were visiting some of the more remote villages. No longer were they said to "act as locusts"—that is, to appear periodically to garner supplies and men from the districts and then disappear until the next onslaught. Instead, they appeared regularly to collect taxes and to take censuses, and

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964

FA28 Mossi FA28

[post-world War II period]

As the politicians grew skillful at the game of metropolitan
politics, their power increasingly eclipsed that of their chiefly benefactors 175*
and of local French administrators. For example: 631
554

> A local chef de poste summoned the district chiefs to bring their potential 665
> draftees for the war in Algeria early in the morning on a specific date to be 634
> examined by medical officers. Those chiefs who looked upon any summons
> with a trepidation born of their past experience with prewar administrators,
> arrived at the headquarters as early as 5:30 A.M. on the morning in question,
> bringing their young men with them. Many of these chiefs, whose only [489]
> means of transportation was their slow-moving ceremonial horse, spent the [492]
> night en route to be there at dawn. More sophisticated chiefs coming from
> similar distances left on the same morning and arrived at about 8:00 A.M.,
> the hour when the administrator himself was first seen stirring in his residence. [493]
> One chief, a war veteran, rode up on his bicycle at about 8:45 A.M.
> in a most unchiefly manner and became the butt of jokes from the other
> waiting chiefs. Another district chief, who was an elected representative,
> did not arrive until about 9:30 A.M., and he was greeted on arrival by the
> administrator. This man had only about half a mile to travel, and he did
> so in his car. His colleagues greeted him with a mixture of jokes, feigned
> awe, and surprise, and some of them addressed him as "Mogho Naba" and
> "Governor."[29]

175*
Another example of the shift in the balance of power was the relationship 643
that developed between Joseph Conombo and the Mogho Naba of 554
Ouagadougou. The Mogho Naba had nominated and supported Conombo 648*
as a candidate for deputy to the National Assembly. He was elected, and
later became Secretary of the Interior in the Mendès-France Government 646
of 1954. He thus had access to power undreamed of by the Mogho Naba.
Being a Moaga as well as a good politician, he never flaunted his authority
before his traditional chief; nor did the Mogho Naba try to exercise his traditional
powers over him. But their behavior toward each other clearly
demonstrated that they were both aware of the shift in power, even though
they were both too wise and too polite to make an issue of it.

Other political forces also jeopardized the position of the chiefs. For 175*
example, as head of the Union Voltaïque, Conombo had an honored posi- 646
tion within a Paris-based African parliamentary group called the Indé- 648*
pendants d'Outre-Mer (IOM). He would have held an even more impor- 665
tant position within this group if he had had wider support among the non- 554
Mossi in the Upper Volta. But his power was limited by the presence and
competition of the MDV, which, while Mossi-supported, was anti-chief;
the Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution Africaine (MPA), an anti-Mossi
and anti-RDA party formed in 1954 by Nazi Boni of the Bobo ethnic
group and supported by some officials in the administration; and the Parti
Démocratique Voltaïque (PDV), a local branch of a now less radical RDA

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175 *

Mossi chiefs of being a modernist, was elected as the first Vice-President of 631
the new government. Not only was the Mogho Naba deprived of the opportunity 642
to become the African head of the Upper Volta, but such stalwart 665
supporters of the chiefs as Conombo and Bouda were left out of the 668
government. Thus, after twelve years of opposition to Houphouët-Boigny,
Mogho Naba Sagha and his chiefs were finally defeated. Their defeat was [643]
made even more ignominious by the elevation of a non-Mossi commoner
to a position of dominance over the Mossi chiefs.[37]

Having lost out in the Upper Volta, the Mossi chiefs had no spokesman when the new Vice-Presidents of the Government Councils of the French West African territories and the European Presidents of these territories met at Dakar to discuss the problems of the truncated French West Africa Federation. No one mentioned the problem of the position of the traditional chiefs. As far as the politicians were concerned, the issue of the chief on the inter-territorial level was dead. It had relevance only in those territories where the chiefs retained some influence.

*
In an effort to consolidate their hold on the Upper Volta, the PDV-RDA 175
members in the PDU met in September 1957 and sought to convert the 642
PDU into a territorial subsection of the RDA. This move was resisted by 665
the supporters of the chiefs within the PDU, especially by Conombo, who
as leader of the PSEMA, an important faction within the PDU, had been
completely eclipsed by Coulibaly and the PDV. Conombo resigned from
the PDU and announced his intention to rebuild the PSEMA with the sup-
port of the Mossi chiefs. On November 12, however, before his plans could *
be put into action, Mogho Naba Sagha II died in Ouagadougou and politi- 175
cal activities in the Upper Volta came to a standstill. A period of national 642
mourning was proclaimed, and politicians from all parties gathered to pay 665
their last respects and to eulogize the monarch. 643
[765]

Sagha's death, like that of all Mossi princes, was ascribed to foul means,
although it was clear that he had succumbed to uremia. The people re- [579]
acted to the interregnum by looting, and the shopkeepers in Ouagadougou
and surrounding areas were compelled to close their establishments. "The
people of Ouagadougou ran to Saba, but the merchants there were quite
diligent, and needed no police force to protect them."[38] It was reported [644]
that those wives of the deceased ruler who were not at the palace at the [178]
time of his death took off the brass anklets denoting their royal status and
became free women. If this actually happened, it was an unprecedented
occurrence.

175 *
When the Mossi traditional electoral college convened to choose a new 643
Mogho Naba, it reportedly considered the candidacy of both Moussa Con- 666

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* 175 ● 643 go, Sagha's eldest son, and Etienne Congo, Sagha's brother. Etienne Congo
666 allegedly had the support of some politicians, but he was rejected in favor
of Moussa. The new ruler was accepted by the Government Council as the
"supreme chief of the Mossi" and was installed in the traditional manner.
He indicated in his acceptance speech that he was "like a rock [*kougri*]
that nothing can move," and became known as Mogho Naba Kougri. A
few days after his installation, he appeared in full regalia before the mem-
* bers of the Territorial Assembly to deliver what was probably the most
175 difficult inauguration speech ever composed by a Mogho Naba. This speech
643 will be quoted in full, because it may well be a eulogy for the Mossi chief:
539

> Over and above the signs of respect shown to the mortal remains of my father, and later the expressions of keen satisfaction on the people's part for the choice of which I have been the object—over and above all this, I see the great interest that the governmental and administrative authorities attach to the role which my ancestors have always fulfilled, and which I am called upon to fulfill anew. Over and above all of these external manifestations, I see the unfailing love of all the Mossi for the throne I occupy and for the tradition I represent along with my confreres. Because the importance of my position, as well as the honor that befalls me, surpasses the meager reality and the possibilities of one man, it is with conviction, sincerity, and faith that I present myself to all of you to tell you that while I accept with fortitude these responsibilities and these honors for the love of my people, I count upon the cooperation and friendship of all, the faithfulness, devotion, and courage of all the Mossi, to acquit myself worthily and to preside not in a passive but in an active and decisive way over the social and economic evolution of our country.
>
> Although I represent tradition and custom in this country; although I must ensure the survival of venerable customs, concerning which we shall be intransigent; I am aware, nevertheless, that there are customs which adapt themselves with difficulty to the exigencies of the modern times in which we live.
>
> * 175 643 631 539 This is why, in addressing myself to all the customary chiefs, and especially to my closest associates, I shall say that we have no right to remain passive observers of the reconstruction of our country and of the multiple transformations of the society over whose destiny we have always presided. We must move along with the tide, but in order not to be swept along at a headlong pace and risk failure before reaching our goal, we must stand in the vanguard of the race and lead it at a vigorous and satisfying pace, but one which does not stifle the weak, for they too have a right to life, to progress, to well-being, and to our protection.
>
> As recently as ten years ago, it was easy to be a chief, just as it was easy to be a cercle commander. It was enough to give orders for everything to run smoothly. But today, the chief must add to his title a real merit, a knowledge of men, a true devotion, an integrity, and, above all, a commitment to the welfare of the people under his jurisdiction. It is under these conditions alone

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that the customary chiefs will preserve and extend their influence, and it is our task to extend this influence. For, if the new institutions are meant for the progress and welfare of the Africans, then they must also be meant for that of the chieftainship.

Our intention, then, is not to leave the management of the country to the elected representatives alone, but to remain in close collaboration with them; for, if the elected representatives of yesterday have rights, the representatives of several centuries' standing retain theirs also.

Intent as I mean to be on curbing all the abuses for which the people have customarily blamed the chiefs, I will not cease to remind the Chief of the Territory, the members of the Government Council, and the elected representatives at all levels, that they themselves must remain, before God and man, the ones truly responsible for these abuses. For, while the lot of the civil servant has improved considerably, and that of the elected representative is at the summit of the pyramid, that of the chief has remained quite modest and quite comparable to that of the still miserable peasant—riches for the others, poverty for himself.

Your Excellency the Governor, Honorable Ministers, and Parliamentarians, I am sure that you understand me. I am equally sure that you think of the meager outlook for the territory, but it is necessary that everyone live well during the period of the seven fat cows, and meagerly during that of the seven lean cows. The cooperation of the chieftainship will be granted to you increasingly for the economic and social betterment of our territory. It devolves upon you, as agents of superior authority, to rid the chiefs of the arbitrary vexations to which no civil servant is subjected any longer, and to send them forth, not as mercenaries but as true captains, into the battle which we all have joined against the human misery that weighs so heavily upon our people.

We are all aware of the magnitude of the struggle, and the cooperation of the chiefs, who influence the entire Voltaic population, may be needed to crown it with success.

Moreover, your Excellency the Governor, the chieftainship has always served well—perhaps has served France, or at least its representatives, too well, at the expense of its own interests.

But I will deliberately forget the errors of the past. I shall remember only the true fidelity which my fathers and their associates have always displayed toward France. I shall look only for the gratitude of the Government of the French Republic on their behalf, and for the considerable role they played in transforming our country. I shall think only of that Franco-African friendship which under normal circumstances will lead us to success, happiness, and peace. I know that the times are difficult; I know that men today have numerous reasons for quarrels. I know that vast popular or so-called popular movements sometimes topple all that other men have built with much patience and wisdom. But despite all of these things, it is with words of concord and of peace that I wish to close, hoping that throughout our political battles we shall keep in mind the need for peace, because man is only happy insofar as he enjoys social peace, as well as peace of the heart.[30] [648]*

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* 175 643 [648]

For all its occasional eloquence, the new Mogho Naba's speech was clearly self-serving; moreover, the French officials to whom it was addressed were withdrawing from the territory, and the young Mossi elite had other ideas about the distribution of power. It is no wonder, then, that most of the politicians listened to his speech in respectful silence and then "calmly went ahead with their tasks," confident, it seems, in their new status as the elected representatives of the people.[40]

* 175 643 668 578 [646]

The new Mogho Naba was faced with a political situation in which he could play only a limited role. His strength now lay exclusively among the more conservative elements of the newly enfranchised rural masses. The political representative of this group was Conombo, who in November 1957 went ahead with his plans to rebuild the PSEMA. In December Conombo saw a chance to embarrass and perhaps defeat the Coulibaly Government when the Territorial Assembly decided to vote on the budget of the Upper Volta; he and his followers withheld their vote of confidence in the Government and tried to force it to resign. But the conditions under which the members of the Territorial Assembly could force a government to resign were not clearly defined by the loi-cadre. The various parliamentary groups appealed in vain to Paris and to Houphouët-Boigny to resolve the problem. Coulibaly broke the impasse by forming a new coalition and giving Maurice Yaméogo, an Indépendant candidate who had been a member of the RDA and later of the MDV but had switched back to the RDA, the important portfolio of Minister of the Interior. Finally, the Assembly, which had been adjourned, reconvened in April 1958 and confirmed Coulibaly in power. In a speech to the Assembly, Coulibaly declared: "It is my imperative task to tell you that each one of you is faced today with a decisive choice. You must choose either a pooling of efforts and good will in the interests of the country, or the pursuit of personal quarrels and partisan rivalries that will undermine the public welfare."[41]

* 175 643 *648 578

The Mogho Naba and his political allies suffered yet another defeat with the Assembly's approval of the Coulibaly Government. However, Kougri had other strings to his bow. In June 1958, when de Gaulle returned to power, Kougri sought to gain the General's favor, and to raise his own status, by pledging his support and that of the Mossi chiefs. This astute political move infuriated many Voltaics, Mossi and non-Mossi, politicians and non-politicians. Amadou Tamboura, a member of the MDV, replied to the Mogho Naba in the newspaper *Paris-Dakar*. Under the headline, "The Message of the Mogho Naba to General de Gaulle Commits Only Himself," he wrote:

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> It will be well if the Mogho Naba understands that he owns but the vestige 175*
> of a past whose hour has irrevocably tolled, and that his message to the Presi- 643
> dent of the Council [de Gaulle] commits no one in the Upper Volta but him- 648*
> self, a mere citizen like the others. 578
>
> I deplore the discrimination which the message of the Mogho Naba implicitly contains. I should like to say to the Mogho Naba that in the Upper Volta there are no Mossi, Fulani, or Bobo people, but only Black people struggling for their liberty. No Mossi or any other Voltaic would agree to the Mogho Naba's expression of fidelity to France in his name. If this must be done, then the Territorial Assembly and the Government Council alone are qualified to do so.[42]

Despite these attacks and numerous suggestions in the press that the Mogho Naba and the Mossi chiefs were developing a "Touré complex" (i.e., the fear of suffering the same fate as the Fulani chiefs of Fouta Djallon, who had been deposed by Sékou Touré, Vice-President of the Guinea Government Council), the Mossi ruler actively supported acceptance of the constitution of the Fifth French Republic, which promised the colonies full internal self-government within the "French Community."
Since the constitution was adopted by the Upper Volta population by an [177]
overwhelming favorable vote of 99.1 per cent, no one could estimate how [642]
effective the Mogho Naba's support had been.[43]

Coulibaly died just before the referendum, and was replaced on an 175*
interim basis by Yaméogo. The parliamentarians accordingly had to 646
choose a new leader, now to be President of the Government Council, 642
as well as to draw up a constitution for the new republic and determine 666
whether it would join any of the regional federations then being considered by several territories. The Territorial Assembly was scheduled to meet in extraordinary session on October 17, 1958, to select a successor to Coulibaly.
The Mogho Naba, anticipating dissension and perhaps once again seeking [643]
the limelight, sent a message to the representatives on October 15, urging
"a government of union and public safety." But the politicians resented [578]
what they regarded as his interference in matters that did not concern him; few, if any, took his message seriously, and none replied.

The Mogho Naba therefore decided to force the issue. He summoned 175*
his traditional ministers to a conference, and, despite the objections of the 643
Baloum Naba, obtained their permission to order his Tansoba to muster 669
his warriors and lay siege to the Territorial Assembly. Early in the morn- 578
ing of October 17, about 3,000 Mossi warriors, armed with bows and arrows, swords, spears, and ancient flint guns, converged on the Assembly. Later that morning, the Mogho Naba himself, accompanied by his Tansoba,

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* 175 arrived on the scene, dressed in his dark-brown cotton war cloak and his
● 643 war bonnet, the symbol of his power. The demonstration lasted until 11
669 A.M., when the French Army undertook to scatter the warriors. Finally,
*578 the Ouidi Naba ordered the warriors to return to the palace. Only then
[648] did Max Berthet, the High Commissioner, open the Assembly session with
an expression of regret for the "unacceptable and incomprehensible" demonstrations.[44]

The Assembly adjourned that afternoon and did not meet again until October 20. In the interim, the parliamentarians took measures to deal with this challenge to their power. On October 18, the Government Council issued a communiqué "stigmatizing Friday's demonstration." The Council regretted that the demonstration had prevented a democratically elected body from sitting, but affirmed that "order and public security, indispensable to everyday life, will be maintained."[45] On the following day a longer communiqué was issued, declaring that a truce had been signed by the authorized representatives of the Union Démocratique (Voltaic section of the RDA) and the Mouvement de Regroupement Africain (Voltaic section of the PRA) after a three-day meeting in Ouagadougou. According to the communiqué, the two groups had agreed that "the unity of the democratic forces of the country" was "the decisive question of the hour."

[646] The Territorial Assembly met in Plenary Session on October 20, and on the basis of the political truce, 68 representatives unanimously elected Maurice Yaméogo as President of the Government Council. The politicians further showed their disdain for the Mogho Naba by adopting the following motion:

> The Territorial Assembly, in the unanimous assurance that it alone has the mandate of the Voltaic people to legislate in their name, solemnly declares that, in the face of all opposition, it will work to give the Voltaic State democratic institutions conforming to the aspirations of the population, within the framework of the constitution which they approved by such a strong majority on September 28. Furthermore, it is insistent in its demands that the authorities responsible for public order do everything in their power to determine the persons responsible for the demonstration and to see what should be done to avoid a recurrence of such an event.[46]

The Mogho Naba soon found to his chagrin that even some of his own vassal chiefs had turned against him. They had been persuaded by the politicians that the French Government would never allow the Mogho Naba to take over the country, and furthermore that he had overstepped his bounds and had thereby endangered further the institution of the chieftainship. The Bureau of the Syndicate of the Traditional Chiefs of

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the Upper Volta met, discussed "the affair of October 17," and issued a 175* statement dissociating itself from the Mogho Naba's action, reaffirming 643 ● its desire to collaborate with the established authority, and requesting a 669 clarification of the status of chiefs in the new order. 578 The Government Council of the Upper Volta welcomed this statement, and hastened to reassure the chiefs that their status was not in danger: "It is not a question of damaging the traditional chiefs as a group, but rather of stigmatizing vigorously an act emanating from a superior chief like Mogho Naba Kougri, the consequences of which, unforeseen as they were, could have placed all the Mossi chiefs in a regrettable and irreparable position."[47]

The Mogho Naba had obviously reached a political impasse, and he next 643 turned his attention to creating a new image of the chieftainship. 175* To this end, he married a young Mossi woman in accordance with the civil statutes 178 of the state, thus becoming the first Mogho Naba and the first important Mossi chief to do so. A spokesman at the wedding placed this act in its proper perspective with the following words:

> I should now like to underscore the fact that this date, November 22 [1958], will be inscribed officially in the annals of the Upper Volta. For the first time in the history of our country, an Emperor, the person who best symbolizes tradition, has upset ancestral habits in the interest of progress. For the first [644] time a woman will be given consideration in a royal court where she will be able to feel at her ease. For the first time, the spouse of a traditional chief will have her place near her husband as an equal and steady companion.[48]

The politicians were apparently prepared to recognize the eminence of the 175* chiefs as long as they did not attempt to intervene in the affairs of the state, 631 and a number of them attended the Mogho Naba's wedding. 642 Among those present were the Presidents of both the Government Council and the Territorial Assembly, parliamentarians from various parties, and the mayors of Bobo-Dioulasso and Ouagadougou. On December 10, 1958, the Terri- [646] torial Assembly confirmed Yaméogo as President of the Government Council. The Assembly also approved his slate of ministers, among them Bouda, the Mossi chief who had once been a strong supporter of the traditional political hierarchy but who now belonged to the UDV-RDA. Then, on December 11, the Assembly decided to adopt the draft of a proposed constitution for the Upper Volta. Articles 2 and 3 of Paragraph I of this constitution state explicitly:

> The Republic of the Upper Volta is one and indivisible, secular, democratic, and social. Its principle is that the government is *of the people, by the people, and for the people. . . .*
>
> *Sovereignty belongs to the people. No section of the population, and no individual, may usurp it.* [Italics mine.][49]

ernment of Charles de Gaulle, Deveze declares (p. 74): "Moreover, the Mogho Naba, 000 himself king of the Mossi of Ouagadougou, one of the most powerful dynasties of French Africa, who was placed under surveillance by order of Boisson [the local Vichy-ite commander] and separated from his subjects, committed suicide after calling his son [648] and solemnly commanding him not to take power 'until the true French should return.'" If this is true, the heir to the throne either could not or would not follow his father's advice.

33. Today a girl is usually chosen as Kourita, because it is easier to banish a woman than a man from the capital. Nevertheless, when Mogho Naba Kom II died in 1942, the young girl chosen to be Kourita was hidden by her mother, and as a result the funeral and the investiture of the new ruler were delayed.

34. See Cheron, "La Cour du Boussouma Naba" (pp. 304–12), for a description of the court of the Boussouma Naba, an autonomous provincial ruler.

35. Dim Delobson (p. 8) claims that the Mogho Naba had the right to ratify the [643] nomination of all Dimdamba, and that it was he who gave them their insignia of office.

36. Cheron, "Contribution," p. 651. He also reports (p. 654): "The Boulsa Naba was elected by a special college. In principle, the choice of this college always fell on one of the sons of the deceased, generally the eldest."

37. *Ibid.*, p. 672.

38. Dim Delobson (p. 143) claims that the person who was asked to give a sacrificial animal to the Baloum Naba was thus assured of the nomination. But the Nobere chief with whom I discussed this matter insisted that he and all the other claimants had given sacrificial animals, and that he did not know he had been chosen until he was notified by the Ouidi Naba.

39. Despite a legend which says that a young woman once ruled the Doulougou district as regent for her young son, the choice of district chief was always a man old enough to rule. If a chief's heir was still a boy, the nam was given to another relative and no provision was made for it to return either to the boy or to his descendants. Unless the boy were fortunate, neither he nor his line ever received the nam again.

40. The ingredients used by the Baloum Naba in preparing the namtibo are kept secret. Most people believe that he uses some elements of the royal amulets, blood, and other liquids. It is not known whether the blood used in ancient times was that of a slave or merely of an animal. Most of the district chiefs with whom I discussed this point reacted with horror to the implication of cannibalism, and insisted that the blood was from animals sacrificed the previous day. However, commoners believe that human blood was used.

41. A fact of great importance in understanding Mossi expansion is that the Kouritadamba of the Nobere district chiefs were banished to the Gurunsi region of Gouroungo on the other side of the Red Volta River. The last Kourita from Nobere is now living in that area, where he rules over a Mossi population drawn from Nobere district and Manga district.

42. Cf. Mangin, p. 19.

CHAPTER FOUR

1. Cf. Socquet, p. 62.
2. Barth, III, 643, 648; Binger, II, 479.
3. Crozat, p. 4822.
4. Delafosse, II, 128–29.
5. Tauxier, *Le Noir du Yatenga*, p. 90.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 93, 100.
7. Crozat, p. 4849.
8. Delafosse, II, 29.
9. Mangin, pp. 12 ff.
10. Cheron, "Contribution," pp. 673–74.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 654–55, 657–58.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 680.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 670.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 685–86.

[p.237]

CHAPTER 9

Trade and Markets Among the Mossi People

BY ELLIOTT P. SKINNER

105
The Mossi represent the dominant population of the Voltaic Re- [131]
public, numbering about 1,600,000 out of some 3,200,000 inhabitants. [161]
They represent the unique example of a group which has preserved its [178]
ethnic identity and political autonomy through all the vicissitudes [648]
of Sudanic history until it was conquered by the French in 1896. Tra-
dition records that the people who became the Mossi left the Dagomba [173]
region in present-day Ghana during the eleventh century and moved
into the bend of the Niger River, carving out three large kingdoms
and smaller principalities in the process. At the head of these still [642]
extant kingdoms are rulers *(Moro Nabas)* who formerly held feudal- [643]
like control over the provinces, districts and villages which comprise [631]
their domains. The villages, with their patri-local, polygynous, ex- [821]
tended family households, formed the basic Mossi settlement pattern. [592]
A complex hierarchical administrative apparatus carried the power [631]
of the Mossi rulers into the smallest villages, and funneled taxes and
tribute back to them. This structure still exists, but of course it has [648]
been modified by the French.

The Mossi were and are still divided into stratified royal, noble [565]
and commoner patrilineages. Characteristic of this lineage system is [613]
a process by which royal sub-lineages descend serially until they
merge with the mass of commoner lineages. Below the lineages there [563]
once were large non-Mossi groups of serfs and slaves, but these people
have now been grouped into lineages and have become Mossicized.

The topography of Mossi country is typical of the Sudanic grass- 133
lands. It is an immense plain, some 1,500 feet above sea level and
broken only by three low mountain ranges and numerous small hills.
The annual total rainfall is between 30 and 40 inches, and falls 132
almost entirely as heavy showers or thundershowers during the period
from June to September. So narrow is the margin of rainfall for [133]
successful crop cultivation that any variation in the cycle results in [511]
low crop yields and a difficult "hungry period" the following year
before the new crops are harvested. The Mossi do not practice irri- 133
gation, and would have trouble doing so because the three Volta [241]
Rivers which drain their territory serve as drainage chiefly during
the rainy season. Only the Black Volta has water all year round; the

175 people have become Mossicized in language and culture, but it is
437 doubtful whether they would have taken the Hausa for Mossi. The
441 true Mossi may have played a minor role in the caravan trade, but I
am certain that they took part in it and that they did so before the
French conquest of their country.

175 There is little doubt that the Mossi traded with the caravans that
437 passed *through* their country. Crozat, who visited Moro Naba Wobogo
439 six years before the conquest, reported that the king

> [643] . . . appeared to have had some business relations with white merchants who came up to Salaga every dry season. He sent horses to them in exchange for silver. He claims that he had no reasons to be pleased with their integrity and that the silver which they sent to him contained plenty of copper. It happens also that traders may come as far as Wagadougou, bringing merchandise of German origin. There was one of them on hand during my stay at Wagadougou. I was told that he was an important marabout, a shereef, perhaps an Arab or a Moor, for I was assured that he was very light in color. As was repeated to me several times, his relations with the king were limited to the solemn greetings on Fridays. He has never entered the royal hut in spite of being an important marabout. He was at Wagadougou for about three and one-half months, but he was compelled to return to the coast since the merchandise which he had brought was exhausted. He spoke no Mossi. (Crozat 1891)

The caravans which passed through Mossi country were well organized but seemed to have lacked the regularity which was characteristic of the trans-Sahara ones. Those caravans coming from the north were apparently more regular since they had to await the coming of the great trans-Sahara caravans, which brought them salt and other
[366] valuable merchandise. Those coming from Salaga and points south
[221] traveled at all times of the year, a fact which is corroborated by the
voyage of Krauss, who arrived at the Bere market during August and the height of the Mossi planting season. This was a period of scarcity or "hungry period" as Krauss himself observed, and it is doubtful whether the Mossi had much to trade at this time. Nevertheless, caravaneers always found some trade goods at the larger Mossi market centers all through the year, even if only cloth and cotton bands.

[221] The main season for external trade in Mossi country came after the harvest. In the words of Marc, who served there shortly after the conquest:

> Towards the end of the rainy season, in September or October, the
> [364] Yarse begin to assemble the livestock in order to leave for the south. In
> certain large commercial centers like Kaya, Pouitenga, Dakay, one finds
> [422] around this period the owners of livestock: Mossi chiefs, Fulani or rich
> natives, who are ready to sell their animals. People also assemble sheep of